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CITY

JOURNAL

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Kay S. Hymowitz

Redefining Marriage Away
Robert P. George & David L. Tubbs

The Immigrant Gang Plague
Heather Mac Donald

Bush, the Education President
Sol Stern

Hamilton, Our Founder
Richard Brookhiser

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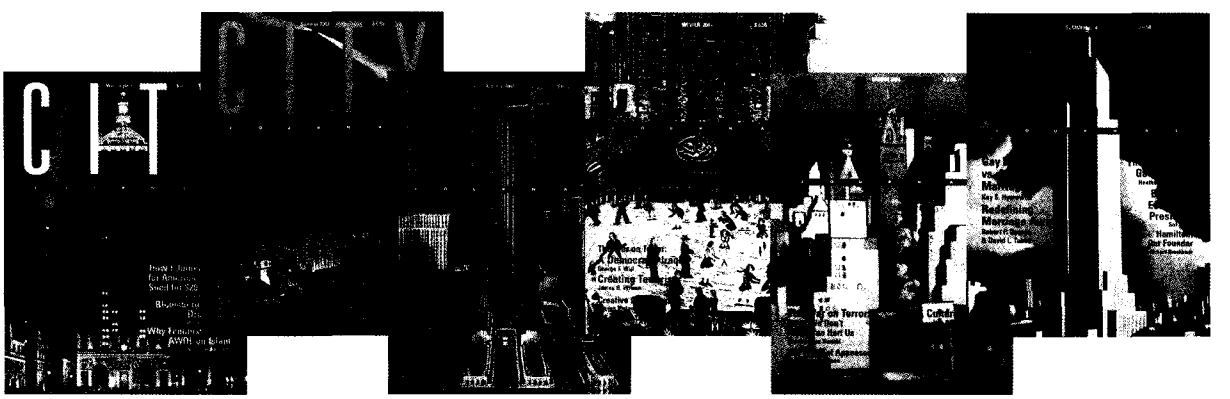

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In Prospect

This summer marks two New York City events of national significance: the 200th anniversary of Alexander Hamilton's death in July; and the Republican National Convention in August. These events are related in more than a coincidental way, too: for Hamilton was the intellectual forebear of the GOP.

As Richard Brookhiser explains on page 92, Hamilton, the only New Yorker among the Founders, was also in a sense New York's founding father. He envisioned a United States very different from the agricultural country of his day, and diametrically different from his archrival Thomas Jefferson's ideal of a nation of yeoman farmers. An immigrant of humble birth but abundant talent and energy, Hamilton, as President Washington's Treasury secretary, laid the foundations of an economy with a vibrant industrial and financial sector, which would provide the widest opportunity for people like him to make the most of their gifts and pursue their happiness—in cities, not down on Jefferson's farm. America became the country of Hamilton's vision, not Jefferson's; and New York, the center of the financial markets that Hamilton created, became the cosmopolitan metropolis of his inspired dreams.

The tension between Hamilton's northern, urban ideal and Jefferson's rural, southern one persisted to the Civil War and beyond, and it's worth noting that, for all the Jeffersonian romanticization, the tension from the very start of the republic really was between northern industrial capitalism and southern slavery, not yeomanry. As historian James McPherson writes, it was during the Civil War, when there were no Jeffersonian southern legislators to oppose it, that Congress passed the "Hamiltonian-Whig-Republican" program for economic development that sparked a "Second American Revolution," radically transforming the country. Taken together, the Homestead Act (which peopled the West with property owners), the founding of land-grant state colleges (which created a great mass of educated and technically skilled workers and entrepreneurs), and the approval of a transcontinental railroad to knot the nation's commerce together turned America by 1880 into the world's foremost industrial power. The completion of Hamilton's vision, in other words, took place under the administration of the greatest Republican president—so it is not far-fetched that on this 200th anniversary, the GOP has come to Hamilton's metropolis to nominate its candidate.

For a decade, *City Journal* has regularly reported on the state of the American family—our courtship practices, child-rearing habits, and sex-education orthodoxies; our sense of what it means to be a man or a woman; our increasing tendency to decouple childbearing from marriage—and we have done so in the Founders' belief that the family is the fundamental little platoon of which society is constructed and the crucible in which citizens are formed. The strength of the republic, we have argued, depends on the strength of its basic unit, and therefore all these matters are of concern to social policy.

It's in this context that the two stories in this issue's cover package address the contentious topic of gay marriage, an idea we oppose. As advocates frame the issue, it is a matter of civil rights: their demand is directed to the government to include them in the civil contract that is marriage. To evaluate this claim, however, it is important to ask why government is in the marriage business at all, since in general individuals are capable of managing their sexual relations and the vows they make to each other without government help. In "Gay Marriage vs. American Marriage" on page 16, Kay S. Hymowitz gives a profoundly illuminating answer to that question as it bears on American society and American government—an answer that shows why gay marriage is a contradiction in terms. And on page 26, Robert P. George and David L. Tubbs explain how such a redefinition of marriage would define the institution out of existence.

As a journal profoundly identified with Hamilton's city, we have always taken a genially cosmopolitan view of people pursuing their own happiness in their own way. So our opposition to gay marriage as incompatible with the meaning of marriage is by no means based on unfriendliness toward homosexuals. ■

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oundings

The War on Poverty at 40

We've learned what uplifts—and what doesn't.

Exactly 40 years ago, the nation embarked on two huge federal initiatives aimed at improving the lot of African Americans: the War on Poverty and the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The two programs, so different in their assumptions, turned out to be a giant natural experiment in social policy. Four decades later, with the results clearly in, we can confidently distinguish what works to uplift people from what doesn't.

The Civil Rights Act was the capstone on America's long and tumultuous effort to make a reality out of its founding assertion, penned by a conflicted slave owner of genius, that all men are created equal. Henceforward, the act declared, Americans could not discriminate by race in employment, in places of public accommodation such as restaurants, gas stations, and motels, or in any federally aided program. Though of course racism lingered long afterward, as a practical matter American society, and the opportunity it afforded, was now open to all.

The result was dramatic and unequivocal. Beginning in the mid-sixties, the condition of most black Americans improved markedly. While in 1960, one in three blacks aged 25 to 29 was a high school grad, for example, by 1972 the percentage had doubled to two out of three. The percentage of black college grads also doubled, from 10 percent in 1965 to 21 percent in 1977. Job status and pay showed a corresponding improvement during the sixties and seventies. The proportion of black working women who had white-collar jobs rose from 17 percent to 50 percent, while for black working men the increase was from 11 percent to 28 percent. The median income of black working men rose from 59 percent of the median white working man's income to 69 percent; for black working women, the gain was much greater, from 64 percent to 93 percent.

But even as the opportunity opened by the Civil Rights Act resulted in such dramatic gains for the vast majority of black Americans, the condition of a minority of blacks, perhaps one in ten, markedly worsened in the years after 1964, so much so that a recognizable underclass—defined by the self-defeating behavior that kept it mired in intergenerational poverty—became entrenched in the nation's cities. The data tell that story vividly: the labor-force participation of black men fell from 83 percent in 1960 to 71 percent in 1980, and out-of-wedlock births rose from one in six for blacks in 1950 to over one in two in 1983 and nearly two in three by 1989. As the overall crime rate soared between 1960 and 1980, the black arrest rate (correlating closely with the black crime rate and ten times higher than the white arrest rate) rose by 38 percent. Since, to repeat, most black Americans were succeeding, most of this rise in social pathology didn't involve the majority of blacks but was concentrated among that one-tenth who made up the underclass.

However small a minority, the new underclass was so spectacularly visible because of the blight and disorder it created in the nation's cities that pundits of all kinds spilled oceans of ink trying to explain its origin. What's clear in retrospect is that racism can't be to blame, since just at the moment that the underclass came into existence the Civil Rights Act was permitting blacks to flood into the mainstream. In addition, the 1960s economic boom makes it hard to ascribe the growth of the underclass to a lack of jobs.

Blame instead the enormous changes unfolding in American culture in exactly those years: the sexual revolution, the counterculture's contempt for the "system," the celebration of drugs, dropping out, and rebellion. When this change in our nation's most fundamental values and beliefs filtered down from the elites who started it to those at the very bottom of the social ladder, the consequences were catastrophic. The new culture devalued virtues that the poor need to succeed and celebrated behavior almost guaranteed to keep them out of the mainstream.

The War on Poverty certainly didn't cause the 1960s Cultural Revolution. Quite the reverse: it was itself the pure emanation of the new culture's worldview. But it played such a decisive role in the formation of the underclass because it was one of the principal channels through which the new worldview got transmitted to the worst-off Americans who fell into that class. At the heart of the War on Poverty was the utterly debilitating message that the worst-off were victims:

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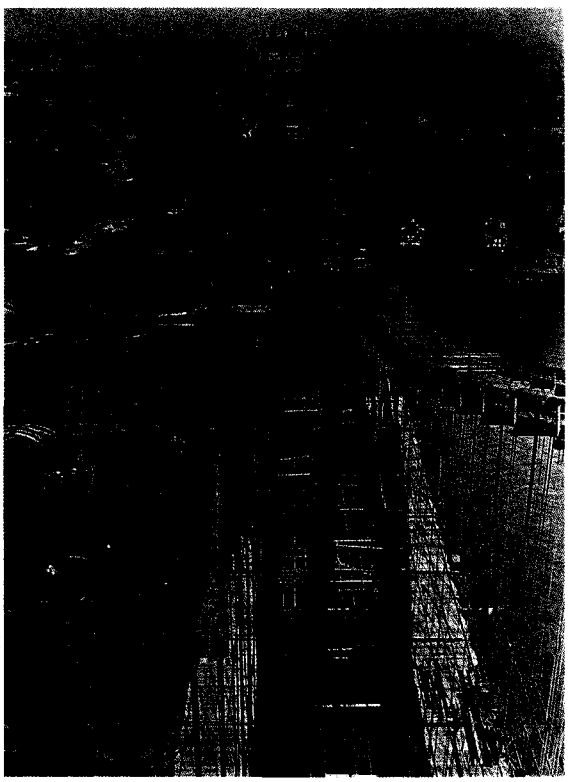
that the larger society, "the system," rather than their own behavior, was to blame for their poverty, their crime, their failure. Either, as War on Poverty architects Lloyd Ohlin and Richard Cloward implausibly argued, there really was no opportunity in the inner city, or, as the much subtler Michael Harrington contended—in a book that greatly influenced President Kennedy to devise the War on Poverty—the vast gulf between the worst-off and the prosperous causes the poor to lose heart, to become too demoralized to grasp the opportunity that lies all around them, even to become self-destructive. In the view of President Johnson, the black poor found themselves so "crippled" by three centuries of racism that they required special help and a different set of standards. As he put it in a speech a year after he launched the War on Poverty on a much more grandiose scale than President Kennedy ever contemplated: "You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and then say, 'you are free to compete with all the others,' and still justly believe that you have been completely fair."

At a moment when poor blacks needed every possible encouragement to move into the mainstream, such a message instead fanned self-doubt and anxiety; indeed, such an imputation of black inferiority as President Johnson's was a kind of soft but corrosive bigotry. What's more, because "the system" was the problem, stacking the deck against blacks so as to defeat their efforts—and "crippling" them into the bargain—the War on Poverty, instead of promoting the self-reliance and personal responsibility needed to seize opportunity, emphasized the need for political and legal action to transform the system.

This overall message, mouthed constantly by the legions of politicians and bureaucrats who sponsored and administered the enterprise, was perhaps its most toxic feature. But two programs directly stimulated the growth of the underclass by converting these principles into policy.

The Community Action Program, the War on Poverty's first (and worst) initiative, rests on a bizarre circularity in reasoning: that the poor must become active in improving their lot by demanding more and better services and transfer payments of which they are the passive recipients. As a practical matter, the most spectacular action the program took was the protracted mau-mauing of New York City's welfare offices, which resulted in loosened eligibility requirements, fatter welfare payments, and a huge expansion of the welfare



BROWN BROTHERS (4)

rolls. This campaign went a long way to destigmatizing welfare and establishing it as a right, as if it were reparations for victimization. In this way, Community Action contributed mightily to the long-term dependency that became a defining, and debilitating, feature of underclass life.

So too with another War on Poverty creation, the Legal Services Corporation, designed to use the courts to change "the system." LSC tirelessly sued to raise welfare payments and expand eligibility—so much so, to take only one example, that a San Francisco affiliate boasted that its efforts had more than doubled California's welfare rolls between 1968 and 1973 and had hiked the average grant by a third, costing the state

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over a quarter of a billion dollars. Erasing the distinction between the deserving and the undeserving poor, LSC successfully sued to have the drug addiction and alcoholism of many of its clients declared a disability, qualifying them for payments under the government's SSI disability insurance scheme, which thus often became a subsidy for vice. And LSC was equally successful in keeping public housing tenants from being evicted when family members dealt drugs or even murdered neighbors, making the projects increasingly anarchic for law-abiding residents.

All this was part of America's decades-long experiment with putting into effect the whole 1960s program for liberating the poor: not just the War on Poverty's generous welfare policies, but also leniency to criminals (so as not to "blame the victim"), lax educational standards aimed at not damaging ghetto kids' self-esteem (which also subverted the War on Poverty's Head Start program), and homeless policies based on the comical fiction that here was yet another class of victims of the system. When the results of such policies became unmistakably clear—the underclass, a crime wave, decaying cities—Americans, ever pragmatic and capable of learning from experience, did a U-turn, passing welfare reform and adopting tough-minded Giuliani-style policing in cities across the land. The result: a halving of the welfare rolls and the violent crime rate, and the lowest child-poverty rate *ever*.

The lesson on this 40th anniversary couldn't be clearer. Freedom works; dependency doesn't.

—*Myron Magnet*

Just the Highlights

This is technological progress?

The *New York Times*'s "Circuits" section recently offered a glimpse of sports in the future tense. Sharp Laboratories of America just developed a new way of watching games—kind of a TiVo for the ultimate fan. By prerecording, say, a baseball contest, and then sharply editing it, the system transforms the viewing experience, so that "there are no ritualistic warm-ups on the screen, no shots of boisterous fans or commercials." No shots of the *longueurs* of the game, either. "Instead there's a nonstop assault of hits, runs and outs." The system, called HiMpact Sports, reduces a three-hour baseball game to an eight-minute blur.

"We're trying to give the possibility to users to concentrate on what they prefer," explains Ibram Sezan, director of information systems technologies at Sharp Labs and developer of the software. "We want to allow people to consume more sports because there is an insatiable appetite for sports."

What a splendid concept! Here, Americans had been content to watch the ebb and flow of athletic battle, immersing themselves in aesthetics and stats. Now, all that can be passé. Sumo wrestling, the *Times* points out, has the greatest "speed gains." The pushing, grunting, and grabbing of an hour-long tournament flashes past in just three minutes. A full National Football League game shrinks to 12 minutes or so.

Thus the avid sports fan can watch five or six contests in under an hour and still have time to nap, gain weight, or watch paint dry, whichever seems the most exciting. As for knowledge of the game itself, who cares?

This process could easily apply to other aspects of show business. Movies needn't bother with plot, for example. A few murders, a car chase, a lovers' argument, an apology, a couple of clinches, and away we go. Sitcoms could just have punch lines, sans setups: "Ladies and gentlemen, Mother-in-Law!" (Canned laughter.)

Poor old T. S. Eliot. He once lamented, "We had the experience but missed the meaning." That was 70 years ago. Now we moderns can have the meaning (Yankees 6, Boston 5) and miss the experience. Way to go, HiMpact! (Eliminate column, run close-up of high fives all around.)

—*Stefan Kanfer*

Budget Spin

A liberal study finds left-wing bias in Gotham's papers.

Liberal media bias in New York City is so pervasive that even liberals can't help noticing it. That, at least, is the lesson of a recent study by the liberal Drum Major Institute, which found that press coverage of the city's post-9/11 budget crisis tilted way to the left.

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Soundings

Released this spring but ignored by the press (for obvious reasons), the report contended that the city's four biggest newspapers—the *Times*, the *New York Post*, the *Daily News*, and *Newsday*—did a lousy job covering the city's budget woes, focusing too much on political "inside baseball" and not enough on the budget's impact on ordinary New Yorkers. But the study, authored by North Carolina State University professor Robert Entman, also turned up, in the 1,111 articles it surveyed, a heavy bias toward big-government, high-tax solutions to the budget crisis, at the expense of solutions that would require shrinking city government. "Taken as a whole," Entman writes, "the newspapers' portrayal of the budget crisis suggests a widespread desire to protect the city government's programs."

Budget stories, the report discovered, quoted on average five people favoring proposals for more taxes and spending for every one person who rejected such measures. News stories on the possibility of re-imposing the city's commuter tax, for example, presented 22 people advocating the hike and only seven against it. Articles on proposals that the state boost spending on New York City had 27 opinions for, zero against.

These patterns aren't surprising, given the newspapers' sources. City officials offered the majority of comments, and they overwhelmingly gave thumbs-up to higher taxes. But the papers also turned disproportionately to others likely to favor taxing and spending over cuts—quoting 45 city workers and union officials and 33 representatives of liberal advocacy groups, for example, but just five business people.

The study shows that the *New York Post*—often accused by other journalists in the city of trumpeting a conservative agenda in its news pages—had the most balanced coverage. Yet even the *Post* articles had more quotes supporting than opposing the idea of protecting city programs from budget cuts.

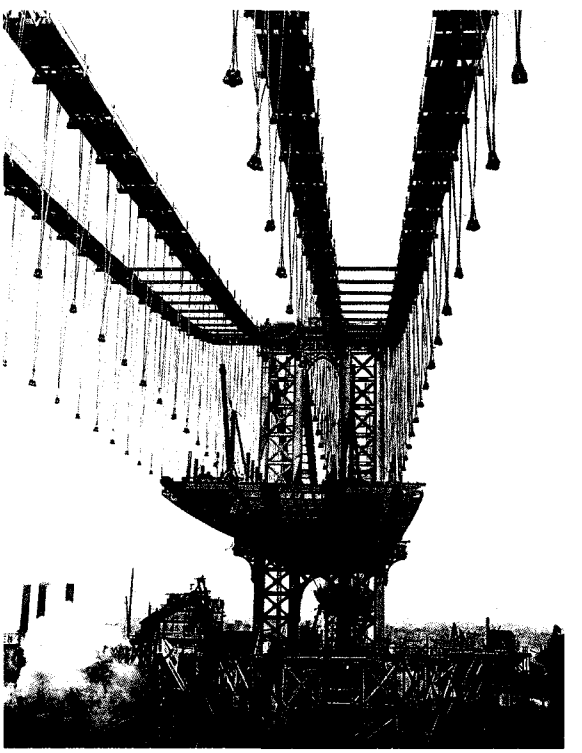
In a note appended to the report, Drum Major Institute president and former mayoral candidate Fernando Ferrer urged papers to humanize their budgetary coverage, making it less narrowly political. We'll add that the press might want to make its budget coverage less narrowly ideological, too.

—*Steven Malanga*

Yuck!

New York pols get down and dirty.

In early 1950, Lucille Ball discovered she was pregnant. She and her husband, Desi Arnez, broke the news to her previous employer, Harry Cohn of Columbia Pictures, and then went to see Cecil B. DeMille, who had just cast the redhead in his upcoming circus epic, *The Greatest Show on Earth*. Now the great impresario would have to change his plans. Furious, he turned to Desi: "Congratulations. You are the only person in the world to screw Columbia Pictures, Harry Cohn, Paramount, Cecil B. DeMille, and your wife, all at the same time." Half a century later, such a spectacular feat has recurred. This time, though, it's New York politicians playing Desi and the citizens of New York cast in the role of De Mille et al.



Up in Albany, Sheldon Silver is speaker of the Democrat-controlled assembly—just the sort of guy a hard-line feminist could love, ever eager to promote laws punishing cads who take advantage of women. Thus, his fellow solons must have

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been shocked—*shocked*—to see Silver hit with a civil lawsuit for "tolerating a culture of sexual harassment in the workplace." Furthering the irony, Silver in his spare time is counsel to Weitz and Luxenberg, one of New York's most influential law firms, known to prosecute torts like the one confronting the speaker.

The civil suit, brought by former legislative aide "Jane Doe," charges that last year Silver's then-chief counsel, J. Michael Boxley, took her out drinking and then raped her while she was intoxicated. Boxley lost his counsel job after police arrested him on the rape charges. In a plea bargain, he admitted to a lesser charge of sexual misconduct and got six years' probation, plus a $1,000 fine and a stipulation that he register with the state as a sex offender. The suit notes that sexual wrongdoing charges had swirled around Boxley before. In 2001, another former aide, Elizabeth Crothers, accused him of raping her, though she declined to press formal charges.

The Crothers complaint, the suit argues, should have sounded the tocsin for Silver, especially since Crothers had asked Silver to appoint an independent investigator to look into her accusation. The speaker flatly refused, however. Instead, he assigned one of Boxley's own aides to the task. Meanwhile, Silver avowed his "utmost personal confidence" in his chief counsel. According to the suit, Silver said that "his first concern was the 'appearance' of the assembly and that Boxley would not be 'out at bars' anymore, reasoning that is where the 'improprieties' occur."

Boxley must have kept up with his barhopping, though, since the solons are blaming the counsel's 2003 "improprieties" on Albany's swinging nightlife, too. "It's not the responsibility of the institution—what happens off campus," sneered Assemblyman Harvey Weisenberg about the civil sexual harassment suit. "We didn't put her in a bar." Perhaps the "bars-made-me-do-it" defense also will be East Harlem assemblyman Adam Clayton Powell IV's excuse. He's under investigation upstate for getting a 19-year-old intern drunk (New York's legal drinking age is 21) and bringing her back to his hotel room for some hanky-panky. She initially accused him of rape but later told police that the sex was consensual. Albany County district attorney Paul Clyne issued a warning in May that any father who would let his daughter be an intern in the assembly ought to "have his head examined."

The assembly isn't New York's only political body to come under fire for tolerating sexual misconduct. Last year, two staffers of the New York City Council filed federal sexual harassment complaints against Councilman Allan Jennings. This prompted the council to bring in an outside consultant to probe the Queens Democrat's actions. The consultant couldn't corroborate the allegations but did conclude that Jennings had made "both anti-Semitic and gender-inappropriate remarks" to a third employee, council lawyer Saphor Lifrak. The consultant also cited a fourth staffer who claimed that Jennings had sexually harassed her. Lifrak has slapped a suit on council speaker Gifford Miller for allowing the bad behavior to fester and for calling her a liar.

Lest you think that sexual delinquency is their only moral fault, New York pols practice other deadly sins as well—above all, good old-fashioned graft. Last year alone, Bronx assemblywoman Gloria Davis had to resign after pleading guilty to bribery charges, Brooklyn Democratic Party leader Clarence Norman, Jr. was indicted for trying to coerce judicial candidates into hiring party-picked consultants, and Assemblyman Roger L. Green, also of Brooklyn, pled guilty to petty larceny for accepting state reimbursement for travel expenses he didn't incur.

Silver refuses to release his own ethics committee's report on Green's bad behavior, reportedly because the ex-lawmaker wants to make a political comeback and the speaker doesn't want to embarrass him. Why should the public have a right to know what their pols do? And what are narrow legalities and nitpicking ethics rules among friends? Indeed, earlier this year, Silver himself stayed at a luxury suite at Las Vegas's Caesar's Palace, whose owners want to open a casino in New York. Price for you: $1,500 a night. Price for Shelly: $109 a night. Silver and other Albany pols also enjoyed special discounts courtesy of the Avis rent-a-car people, who likewise had pressing business with the state legislature. The speaker's savings: $340. Avis shelled out $15,000 in fines for their (little) gift. Big sum, small sum, it's all just part of the cost of doing

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business in New York, where politicians have set up a pay-to-play system to rival Uganda's.

It's a cliché that New York politics—rotten with special interests, venality, and undemocratic procedures—seems like a conspiracy to screw the public. These days, that may not just be a metaphor. —*Stefan Kanfer*

Consultant Humbug

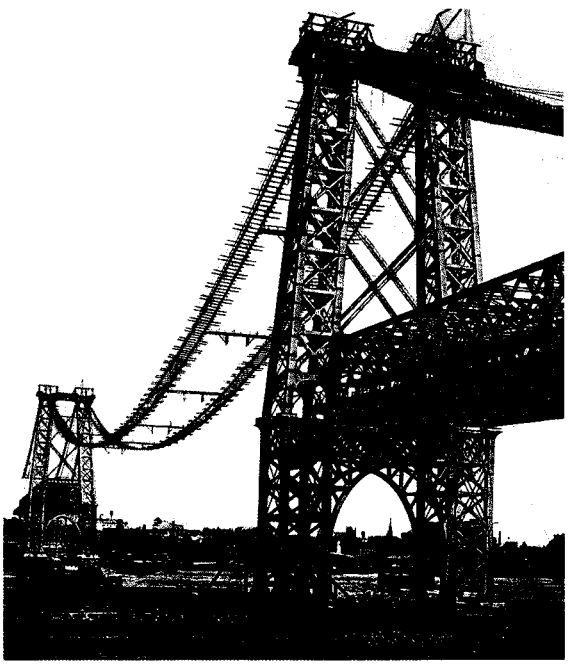
Beware "studies" promising payback from tax-funded development on the Far West Side.

Government officials, lobbying furiously for taxpayer-supported projects on Manhattan's Far West Side—including an expanded Javits convention center, a new hotel, and a vast new stadium for the New York Jets—are waving around studies that promise thousands, even tens of thousands, of new jobs and a massive boost in tax revenues, if only Joe Public will lend a (generous) helping hand. New Yorkers should be deeply skeptical of these kinds of "studies"—and the projects they're promoting.

Over the last decade, an entire industry of consultants has sprung up to churn out similar reports for pols around the country, advocating public subsidies for one big building project after another. Many of the projects, it turns out, have actually been built, and they've proved colossal duds, leading a growing chorus of critics to question the studies' methods. One critic who has reviewed more than 30 of them, University of Texas professor of public administration Heywood T. Sanders, says they're "misleading" and that they "offer no real basis for public investment."

One reason the studies are so misleading in touting the future economic benefits of publicly subsidized projects is that they frequently ignore what the private sector might do with the property instead. Consider what happened back in the mid-nineties, when New York State tried to strip developer Larry Silverstein of a Far West Side property in order to expand the Javits Center. When political infighting derailed the expansion, Silverstein built an apartment building on the site, creating lots of construction jobs and new housing for New Yorkers—without taxpayers footing the bill for any of it.

Equally erroneous in the studies is the notion that, if other cities are building publicly subsidized convention centers or stadiums, then your city needs to fire up its own big projects, too, or else lose potential business and tourism. For example, a PriceWaterhouseCoopers survey, commissioned by the Javits Center, argues: "Other competitive convention centers have embarked



upon expansions and improvements . . . thereby placing greater competitive pressure on the Javits Center." But what such studies usually neglect to mention is that the convention business hasn't grown much over the past decade, even as cities have added millions of feet in new exhibition space. Result: new centers, like one opening in Boston, remain disastrously underbooked and require fat subsidies just to keep their doors open.

A private business assessing a market that wasn't growing and in which a host of competitors (all losing money) were already on the scene would doubtless not take the plunge and would fire any consultant who recommended jumping in. Things work differently when public officials hire the consultants, though. The officials often aren't looking for a genuinely independent assessment

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but just some ammunition to back them up in their efforts to get a big project built.

Dubious, too, is a third argument that often crops up in the studies, telling public officials that their city is just so dazzling that if they would build a convention center or hotel, everyone would come flocking into it. New York City is especially susceptible to this seduction, because many New Yorkers can't imagine how conventioneers or tourists could prefer any other city.

Anyone who wants to know what the consultants really think can just check out what they're telling the competition. Sanders relates the tale of twin studies done by Coopers & Lybrand in 1997 for officials in Washington, D.C., and New York, when each city was thinking of using public money to expand convention facilities. For the Washington study, the consultants polled meeting planners across the nation to rate eight large cities as convention sites. New York finished dead last. Coopers & Lybrand conveniently left this key detail out of their New York study, which of course called for the city to expand Javits.

The consultants also falsely claim that every economic transaction that would take place at a proposed new stadium or convention center represents new business for the city. Backers of the new Jets stadium, for example, tout a study that says the public investment in the project is a good idea, because it'll help lure to the city mega-events like the Super Bowl. But when a Super Bowl or other huge event comes to town, it often crowds out other business. Some cities have to ask conventions that have booked years in advance to give up their dates to make room. The net economic contribution of a Super Bowl or other big show is thus much less than it might appear.

Similarly, these studies tend to overestimate the positive impact that a new stadium housing a pro team will have on tourism. The consultants, using team-provided data on the number of out-of-towners who attend games during a season, will count all projected spending by these fans, such as money spent on hotel rooms, as generated by the stadium. But economists who've studied pro sports note that tourists often don't come to a city specifically for a sporting event, even if they attend a game while in town. Think of an executive, in town for local meetings, who gets comp tickets to a baseball game from a client. Factor out such attendees, who would probably spend money on something else locally if they had no game to attend, and the real bump that teams and stadiums give to tourism becomes less impressive.

In sum, there's a gigantic difference between these consultant projections and plain old reality. The truth is, disappointments and outright failure mark the real world of publicly financed convention centers, stadiums, and hotels. New Yorkers should keep this reality in mind as the debate over the West Side's future proceeds.

—Steven Malanga

Christo-mania

Christo puts one over on Gotham.

The word "kitsch" derives from the Russian—*keetcheetsya* means "to be haughty and puffed up." The late Columbia classics professor Gilbert Highet further defined kitsch as "anything that took a lot of trouble to make and is quite hideous." He had his own favorites, including the architecture of Miami Beach hotels and overblown literature, particularly the poetry of Ezra Pound. Highet singled out that bard's ode to Manhattan:

My City, my beloved,
Thou art a maid with no breasts
Thou art slender as a silver reed.
Listen to me, attend me!
And I will breathe into thee a soul,
And thou shalt live for ever.

Born in Idaho, Pound, a hick from way back, addresses Manhattan as a flat-chested maid and invites her to achieve immortality by listening to his paeans. Observes Highet: "This is like climbing Mount Everest in order to carve a head of Mickey Mouse in the east face."

In the new millennium, perhaps the biggest kitsch peddler (or rather the peddler of the biggest kitsch) is the vastly overindulged "artist" Christo Javacheff. Together with his wife, Jeanne-Claude, he has just won Mayor Michael Bloomberg's enthusiastic endorsement to wrap hundreds of Central Park's trees in saffron-colored fabric. When completed next year, the installation will cover 23

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miles of selected walkways in the park.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude have had more practice wrapping than the Christmas sales help at Bloomingdale's. Among other objects, they've enveloped the Reichstag in Germany, the Pont Neuf in Paris, some islands in Biscayne Bay, and a Swiss forest. On each occasion, they got themselves lots of ink and airtime and contributed nothing but oversize vulgarity to the scene they sought to obscure.

Cultural guardians in foreign cities have occasionally pointed out that Christo and Madame have harmed the environment and have added zero to anyone's aesthetic appreciation of the nature or architecture they wrap. But here in New York, the most arrogant of all cities in other respects, one sacred cow exists: Art. All must genuflect to it, even if it is vulgar, pretentious, or downright stupid. Nobody wants to risk seeming a rube or a censor, after all—especially the mayor of the elites. Moreover, perhaps the construction will cause money to flood in, thanks to sightseers and tourists. Meanwhile, few officials will dare to notice—aloud, at least—the Emperor's New Kitsch. *—Stefan Kanfer*

Clinton Psychobabble

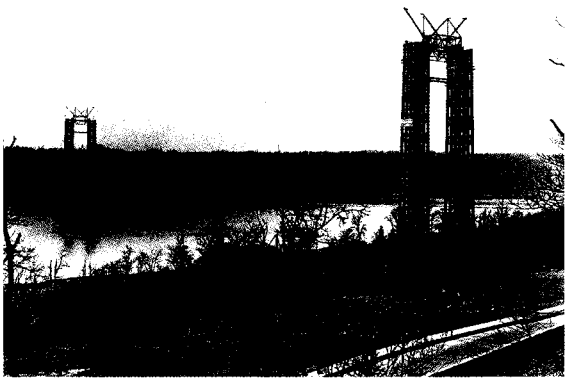
The former president feels his own pain.

In an interview in the *Guardian*, former president Bill Clinton relates how Nelson Mandela guided, counseled, and comforted him in the wake of the Monica Lewinsky scandal. According to Clinton, Mandela told him of how "he forgave his oppressors because if he didn't they would have destroyed him."

Clinton recalls Mandela as having said, "They destroyed my marriage. They abused me physically and mentally. They could take everything except my mind and heart. Those things I would have to give away and I decided not to give them away." And then Mandela added, "Neither should you."

Clinton took a leaf out of Mandela's book of forgiveness and forgave special prosecutor Kenneth Starr and the rest of his "legal tormentors." Proving himself a true child of psychobabble, Clinton continued, "You do this not for other people but for yourself. If you don't let go it continues to eat at you." And could anything in the world be more important than the former president's peace of mind?

You don't have to be an idolater of Nelson Mandela to find Clinton's appropriation of his mantle not merely absurd but repellent. The African might not have been the apostle of freedom that his secular canonization has made



him out to be, but no one can deny that he spent a long time in jail for opposing a monstrously unjust and cruel system of government. To compare the pain of over a quarter of a century's incarceration with the self-provoked humiliation of having one's sordid, adolescent misconduct in the Oval Office publicly investigated raises self-pity to new heights—or rather lowers it to new depths.

This is far from the only instance of Clinton's grotesque egotism, which proclaims him a true child of the sixties. Asked why he thought the Republicans hated him so much, he replied that, deprived by the end of the cold war of the Soviet Union as an object of hatred, they had to have some target on which to vent their anger. Alas for poor Bill, more arrows would soon pierce him than transfixed Saint Sebastian.

Think about what the former president seems to be saying: the cold war resulted from a persistent psychological quirk of Republicans, a need for an object of hatred. Nothing in the nature or conduct of the Soviet Union provoked the hatred of cold warriors, just as nothing in his own behavior might have aroused his opponents' disgust.

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Clinton is the product of the disastrous influence of psychology in our culture. It can render those susceptible to it incapable of distinguishing between the day-to-day flux of our emotional life and the greatest events in history. An interest in our own psychology encourages us to lose all sense of proportion—one reason that people are so apt these days to make trivial metaphorical use of Auschwitz. It also can blind one to the existence of real evil. Clinton, after all, had the power to stop genocide in Rwanda, but his own petty drama was of more interest and importance to him.

—*Theodore Dalrymple*

The Tort Plague Hits Wal-Mart

A federal judge dignifies a flimsy claim.

In June, a San Francisco federal judge ruled that a lawsuit by a handful of female Wal-Mart workers should be transformed into a massive class action case on behalf of 1.6 million women who worked at Wal-Mart over the last eight years. In rendering his decision, Judge Martin Jenkins called the case "historic."

But critics of our civil justice system wouldn't call the case "historic" so much as sadly typical of current U.S. employment law. The suit is based on individual cases that reveal little more than the frustrations of underperforming or unpopular workers, backed up by dubious statistical analysis and tortured logic that binds together contradictory arguments by the thinnest of threads.

The case began as individual claims, which the legal team, led by the trial firm Cohen, Milstein, Hausfeld and Toll—specialists in suing big companies—has fought to elevate into a class action to try to win big bucks from Wal-Mart. To read the complaints behind the original suits is to realize how employment law has degraded to the point where disgruntled workers regularly claim discrimination and sue, based on nothing more than the fact that they have not been promoted.

The first plaintiff listed in the case, Betty Dukes, testifies that she clashed with a female Wal-Mart supervisor and was disciplined for admittedly returning late from lunch breaks, but nonetheless claims that Wal-Mart passed her over for promotions *because* she is a woman, though she offers no evidence. The suit's second plaintiff, Stephanie Odle, was a management trainee, denied promotion after being suspended for what her supervisors say was improper handling of a customer refund. She claims, also without evidence, that the suspension resulted from sex discrimination. While other cases involve accusations by women that supervisors, including female supervisors, made disparaging remarks about women workers—something quite possible in a firm of more than 1 million employees (and individually actionable)—there's nothing in these anecdotes that adds up to a company-wide pattern of discrimination.

Yet since these cases rest on little evidence of actual discrimination, the plaintiffs must show that what has happened to them does represent a pattern of company-wide abuse. Their arguments should deeply disturb the average corporate executive. Central to the plaintiffs' case is the contention that Wal-Mart is a heavily decentralized company, in which managers enjoy wide latitude to make hiring, pay, and promotion decisions. This, the lawyers argue, leaves too much discretion in the hands of store managers, who can thus be influenced by their own stereotypes.

In this scenario, decentralization in management—one of the key productivity-boosting principles of U.S. business in the last two decades—is something that firms must avoid or limit. The plaintiffs' lawyers even quote disapprovingly a Wal-Mart manager who says he relies on "teamwork, ethics, integrity, and the ability to get along with others" in making promotions. "Such unwritten, subjective criteria," the lawsuit states, "are particularly vulnerable to the influence of stereotypes." Only in the moral netherworld that many plaintiffs' attorneys inhabit today would "ethics" and "integrity" be seen as "subjective" criteria to be avoided in hiring or promotions.

Decentralization isn't sufficient to prove company-wide discrimination, so the plaintiffs' team also argues, contradictorily, that Wal-Mart's strong corporate culture sends subtle messages to managers not to promote women. To gin up this argument, the lawyers rely on anything that purportedly shows that Wal-Mart's "culture" is hostile to women, including the fact that Sam Walton would take his top managers quail hunting once

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a year—an activity, the suit contends, that men are more comfortable with than women.

The plaintiffs also employ statistics in an attempt to show discrimination patterns, claiming, for instance, that Wal-Mart's percentage of female managers is far lower than its percentage of female hourly workers. Wal-Mart counters that women apply for management jobs at a lower rate than men and that it actually promotes its female applicants for managerial jobs at a higher rate than it does male applicants. If logic applied in civil courts today, end of discussion. But in the emotionally charged world of discrimination lawsuits, where banks face redlining charges if their loans don't reflect the demographic makeup of the population (regardless of the lack of creditworthy candidates in some neighborhoods, or other inconvenient facts), Wal-Mart can be considered guilty simply because its numbers don't meet some arbitrary standard.

With the plaintiffs making such a flimsy case, the judge would have had to bend over backward to accept this as a class action, and that's just what he did. He admits the contradiction in describing a corporate system as both excessively subjective and at the same time centralized, but like an acrobat on a high wire he argues that there's just enough subjectivity in Wal-Mart potentially to create bias, but just enough central control possibly to justify a corporate pattern. Solomonic evenhandedness this isn't.

The judge also credulously accepts the most subjective expert testimony provided by the plaintiffs on Wal-Mart's corporate culture. He cites the testimony of University of California sociologist William Bielby, who found Wal-Mart's "diversity" policies wanting, because the company "has never performed any survey addressing gender or diversity issues." In other words, it's not enough today to hire and promote based on the qualifications and achievements of your workers; a firm is potentially guilty of discrimination for not taking surveys of gender issues. Reading the judge's section based on such voodoo sociology should strike fear into any company unlucky enough to come before him on employment matters.

That the case against Wal-Mart is so flimsy isn't surprising. Since Wal-Mart became America's largest company, it has also become the most sued. Trial lawyers have set their sights on the firm's deep pockets, aided by scores of unions and left-wing advocacy groups, whose barrage of negative publicity about the company aims to force it to unionize and to soften up public opinion for a big payoff in court. These groups have waged war on Wal-Mart because the firm's technological and management innovations have helped create a productivity revolution that has threatened organized labor and challenged some of the Left's economic orthodoxies. The groups have argued to a receptive press that Wal-Mart's focus on low prices and high employee productivity imposes a high cost upon the economy. Lawsuits like the current one can only succeed if the groups convince enough Americans that there's something insidious in offering a vast range of products at low prices to U.S. consumers.

But the first red flag in the discrimination case should be the legal team itself. Spearheading the case is a lineup that has become typical in employment suits against major companies these days: an alliance between a noted (critics would say notorious) plaintiffs' firm specializing in employment law—Cohen, Milstein—and nonprofit, left-wing advocacy law projects like the Impact Fund. This kind of combo has proven effective, because the plaintiffs' firm can supply the litigation muscle needed to pursue a suit like this over the years, while the legal foundations—supported by contributions from Cohen, Milstein itself and other trial firms—supply the patina of supposedly disinterested respectability and public service that magically turns these into "historic" cases with redeeming social value.

Indeed, Cohen, Milstein needs just such respectable company if it is to appear as a defender of the little guy. This, after all, is the firm that ignited the uproar over discrimination at Texaco by releasing tape transcripts purportedly showing that the company's executives made ugly remarks about minorities, only to have it revealed much later (after Cohen, Milstein pocketed a huge settlement) that the tapes had been mistranscribed and the Texaco execs had made no such statements.

Unfortunately, the only thing "historic" about this case is that it represents yet another step in the debasement of U.S. employment law.

—*Steven Malanga*

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Gay Marriage vs. American Marriage

The gay advocates' civil rights argument forgets what the Founders thought marriage is for.

Kay S. Hymowitz

These days everyone has a strong opinion about marriage, but no one seems to be sure what it is, exactly. Is it a sacramental union? Is it a public recognition of a committed love relationship? Is it a state scheme for distributing health insurance and tax breaks? Or given what two eminent anthropologists writing recently in support of gay marriage in the *Washington Post* describe as a "startling diversity of socially approved forms of marriage," is the institution too varied to fit into a single, dictionary-neat meaning?

The anthropologists are right about one thing: human beings have come up with almost as many ways of getting hitched as they have languages to tell mother-in-law jokes. Some cultures allow only monogamous marriage; some accept polygamy. In many cultures, the wife moves into her husband's family's home; in others, the husband moves into the wife's; in still others, they get a mortgage and move into their own two-bedroom ranch in Levittown. Though most cultures give husbands the primary responsibility for providing for the children, some make the wife's brother—the baby's uncle—responsible for providing the food and the bow-and-arrow lessons. Some cultures don't allow divorce; some allow divorce but not remarriage; some allow divorce if husbands fork over most of their life savings to the likes of Raoul Felder; and others let a guy say "I divorce you" three times before booting his wife out the door.

This protean diversity is central to today's marriage debate. If marriage is, as these examples suggest, an eminently malleable social construct, why shouldn't society shape it any way it likes, especially by letting gays marry each other?

But beneath all the diversity, marriage has always had a fundamental, universal core that makes gay marriage a non sequitur: it has always governed property and inheritance rights; it has always been the means of establishing paternity, legitimacy, and the rights and responsibilities of parenthood; and because these goals involve bearing and raising children, it has always involved (at least one) man and woman. What's more, among the "startling diversity" of variations that different cultures have elaborated on this fundamental core, our own culture has produced a specifically American ideal of marriage that is inseparable from our vision of free citizenship and is deeply embedded in our history, politics, economics, and culture. Advocates for gay marriage cite the historical evolution of that ideal—which we might call republican marriage—to bolster their case, arguing that gay unions are a natural extension of America's dedication to civil rights and to individual freedom. But a look at that history is enough to cast serious doubt on the advocates' case.

Strange as it seems, America's founding thinkers were as interested in the subject of marriage as any of Fox TV's bachelorettes. Given the political experiment that they were designing, they had good reason, for they understood the basic sociological truth that familial relations both echo and shape the political order. "To the institution of marriage the true origin of society must be traced," James Wilson, a member of the Continental Congress and later a Supreme Court

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justice, wrote in 1790. Before the Revolutionary War, legal philosophers and statesmen like Wilson filled magazines and speeches with discussions of what kind of marriage would best live up to the principles of the new country. It's not surprising that they zeroed in on one quality in particular: self-government.

The Founders did not sketch their ideas about marriage on a blank slate, of course. They brought to their task a set of traditional Western assumptions about the institution, and these assumptions remained implicit in their new ideal and still resurface in our current discussions. Given that marriage was originally a religious sacrament, the Founders understood that the institution retained, even in their secular republic, an element of spirituality, an assertion that man is something higher than the beasts and more than a merely material being. The ceremony confers a special, human dignity upon our relations. In addition, they understood that marriage is a contract, regulated by the laws and ultimately enforceable by the state, that spells out property relations between the spouses, as well as their inheritance rights and those of their children. Therefore, marriage is intrinsically a government concern.

In addition to these time-honored beliefs, the Founders brought a more modern idea to the matrimonial drafting table. Like many of their educated contemporaries in Western Europe, they had come to think of marriage in a way congruent with emerging ideals of individual liberty and democratic equality. In the old world, marriage was originally a matter of caste, class, or clan. Courtship was closer in spirit to bartering than romance; young people were to be traded off by elders intent on solidifying family ties and merging family fortunes and acres.

By the late eighteenth century, however, Western Europeans were increasingly emphasizing marriage as a love-match between two self-determining individuals. Young people were free to choose for themselves with whom to spend their lives, and love could transcend class barriers to recognize the intrinsic personal worth of the beloved. This is the lesson of the profoundly democratic novels of Samuel Richardson and Charlotte Brontë, in which the drama concerns a rich, well-born master coming to realize that he loves his servant, that she is a character of sterling worth, and that he should marry rather than merely seduce her. In the same vein, the novels of Jane Austen dramatize what she understood was turning into one of life's most momentous, morally fraught decisions. For if the young could freely choose their own spouses, they needed to do so wisely, transcending mere sexual attraction and judging their suitors' worth in the moral rather than economic sense. Even so, at the time of the Founding, these modern ideas were still more theory than practice in Europe, where arranged marriages remained the norm.

The Founders wanted to clear away many of the traditions that had kept these democratic notions from taking firm hold in old Europe. American marriage would reflect American principles of liberty and self-government. Unlike the hordes of serfs, servants, and subjects in other parts of the world, American citizens were going to shape their own lives and determine their country's destiny. Just as citizens would be self-governing in the political realm, they would also choose their spouses freely. According to Nancy F. Cott's *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation*, the source for much of the history of marriage in America that follows, since the struggle against domination and coercion was the essence of the American nation, the young needed to be free from arranged marriages and the authoritarian fathers who contracted them. As historian Jay Fliegelman has observed, the American Revolution and the new Western seriousness about romantic love, which developed at the same time, both sprang from a heightened valuation of the ideal of self-determination.

Essential as it was, the loving, self-chosen vow was only one ingredient in the recipe for self-government. Self-government also meant citizenly self-reliance. The Founders believed that American citizens should not only be allowed to run their own lives but should be capable of doing so and responsible for doing so. In order to be free from "authority in all its guises," as Jefferson put it, citizens had to be competent, industrious, self-sufficient, and virtuous. All these qualities were to be learned in the republican

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home: "The foundations of national morality must be laid in private families," John Adams wrote in his diary in 1778.

Here Adams was voicing an up-to-the-minute theory of the republican family. Political thinkers imagined the American family as a factory specifically designed to turn out self-governing citizens—something quite different from what other kinds of families did. They believed that the affectionate ties between spouses led to civic responsibility: marriage based on individual choice would promote trust and equality that could then be projected into public life. "In detaching us from self, [love] accustoms us to attach ourselves the more to others. . . . [T]he lover becomes a husband, a parent, a citizen," a 1791 essay in *New-York Magazine* put it. In addition, the Founders recognized, the colonists' pioneer past had already made the American family an unusually and dependably self-reliant and industrious unit, just as later, when the nation expanded westward, the frontier family became a byword for rugged and indomitable self-sufficiency.

"Political thinkers imagined the American family as a factory designed to turn out self-governing citizens."

Most important, republican marriage provided the edifice in which couples would care for and socialize their children to meet the demands of the new political order. If republican marriage celebrated self-government, it also had to pass down its principles to the young; it was supposed to perpetuate as well as to embody the habits of freedom. So whereas in all Western societies, the state concerns itself with fostering the institution of the family because it is the mechanism by which the society reproduces itself, in America that state concern takes on a special urgency, because of child rearing's unique momentousness to the national project.

The small size of American families helped here. As any soccer mom or dad knows, parents with two or three children can invest far more attention in each individual child than those with eight or ten. By the Jacksonian period, the size of American families began to shrink. According to Janet Brodie's *Contraception and Abortion in Nineteenth-Century America*, the number of children born to white native-born women decreased 49 percent in the nineteenth century, from an average of seven children in 1800 to 3.6 by 1900.

Demographers usually explain the decline in fertility as the result of improvements in infant mortality rates and a shift away from a strictly agrarian economy, in which large families were an advantage, but it's also likely that republican parents were discovering that preparing children for self-government was a mammoth undertaking, more demanding than socializing children to thrive in more communal societies.

Early republican child-rearing experts emphasized to American parents that they were responsible for creating independent, industrious, and resourceful future citizens. American children should be brought up to be active, observant thinkers. "All the faculties of a child's mind should be cultivated," wrote Lydia Child in *Mother's Book*; kids should develop "habits of attention and activity of mind."

American theorists also encouraged parents to abandon the demand for absolute, fearful obedience that was a relic of the old world. Children preparing for life in the new country could not remain mere passive subjects within an old-world patriarchal family. Whippings and beatings, commonplace throughout much of the world, were to be used only as a last resort; punishment "should be threatened as seldom as possible, and next as seldom executed as possible," clergyman and child expert Horace Bushnell wrote in 1849. This kinder, gentler discipline was designed to get children to behave virtuously because they had internalized national values, not because they feared either external authority or the shame they would bring on their families.

To hear foreign travelers of the early nineteenth century tell it, the republican couple

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maintaining the homestead or going to church with its republican offspring was noticeably different—though admittedly, there was a downside. British naval officer and author Captain Frederick Marryat wrote of a scene that he witnessed during a visit to the United States in 1839. He watched a three-year-old named Johnny, whose mother had called him to come in out of the cold. "I won't!" the boy answered. "Come, my sweet, I've something for you," his mother implored. "I won't," Johnny pouted. His father took the more patriarchal approach and ordered his son inside. "I won't," the child insisted yet again. "A sturdy republican!" the father exclaimed, smiling, to the captain, who, being from the old world, was standing aghast.

The Founders probably didn't foresee republican children quite like Johnny, but such "sturdiness" may have been inevitable in families in which the young had some freedom to question authority. Marryat may have been disdainful, but other European observers of the new world, including Alexis de Tocqueville, were impressed by the egalitarian, youthful spirit of the American family, which they contrasted with their own stuffy, patriarchal households. Unlike "the respectful and frigid observances of aristocratic families," Tocqueville observed, democratic families enjoy a "familiar intimacy, which renders authority less absolute. . . . [A] species of equality prevails around the domestic hearth." The new political order was placing unprecedented emphasis on individual rights, personal choice, and equality; the new domestic order appeared to be doing the same.

You won't hear much about this historical background in the current debate over gay marriage, but advocates certainly invoke fragments of the American past in their argument. They frequently compare the current predicament of gays with that of other minorities, particularly African Americans, in the days before they had full rights to marriage. History, they argue, shows us that marriage is a civil right that has expanded over time to include previously marginalized groups; gays now deserve those rights as well. "Throughout the history of Massachusetts, marriage has been in a state of change," a group of historians of marriage, family, and the law asserted in an *amicus* brief in the case that legalized gay marriage in the state. Gay marriage "represents the logical next step in this court's long tradition of reforming marriage to fit the evolving nature of committed intimate relationships and the rights of the individuals in those relationships." But detaching the "tradition of reforming marriage" from the multifaceted tradition of republican marriage not only starts history around 1968, but it also presents a seriously distorted picture of why the American government is in the marriage business at all.

While gays often invoke the black/homosexual analogy to assert in a general way that anti-homosexual sentiments are as vicious and irrational as racism, gay-marriage advocates use the comparison much more specifically. Their most commonly repeated argument goes like this: denying homosexuals the right to marry whom they wish is little different from denying blacks the right to marry whites, an injustice written into many state law books well into the twentieth century. It was not until 1967 that the Supreme Court, in *Loving* v. *Virginia*, finally ruled that state bans on such intermarriage were a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment's equal-protection clause. "Marriage is one of the basic civil rights of man," Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote in his decision, in words that have become a familiar refrain in the current debate. The court rested its decision on one important pillar in the sophisticated architecture of republican marriage: that marriage is a civil contract. If the Fourteenth Amendment protects the right of black citizens to enter into a mortgage agreement or take out a car loan, it certainly protects their right to marry whomever they choose. It is logically inescapable, gay-marriage advocates conclude, that the same goes for homosexuals.

And it would be logical—if a pillar were the same thing as the whole building. That the state has an interest in upholding the civil rights of individuals who want to marry doesn't mean that that's the only interest it has in the institution. The state also has a strong—even a life-and-death—interest in marriage as the environment in which the next generation of its citizens is raised.

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An earlier chapter in the history of African-American marriage illustrates this point. After the Civil War, anti-slavery Republicans were alarmed by the promiscuity and rampant fatherlessness among ex-slaves, disastrous consequences of the institution's prohibition against slaves entering into marriage contracts. These abolitionists created the Freedmen's Bureau, in part as a federal marriage initiative: they wanted to encourage ex-slaves to marry and create stable families. Their aim wasn't primarily to ensure the civil right of blacks to enter into contracts of all sorts, including marriage; they believed, above all, that American-style marriage would help ex-slaves become responsible, self-reliant citizens who would rear responsible, self-reliant children. In light of this dual state concern—the rights of the couple *and* the promotion of self-governing families that would mirror and sustain the republic—the historical analogy between black marriage and gay marriage that the advocates posit makes no sense.

In fact, gay-marriage proponents generally treat children as a distraction from the state's interest in marriage rather than crucial to it. They impatiently insist that history has settled the matter: it has definitively separated child rearing and marriage, demonstrating conclusively that marriage is a changing and elastic institution that can easily accommodate homosexuals. "When a third of children are born out of wedlock, when contraception and abortion are available on demand, when you have single-parent adoption legal in every state," Jonathan Rauch, the author of the recent *Gay Marriage*, has opined, "the debate is over about detaching marriage from parenthood—indeed was over years ago." Andrew Sullivan, along with Rauch one of the most thoughtful and eloquent advocates writing today, agrees: the argument that marriage has anything to do with children, he says, "fails socially and culturally because in our culture at this time, procreation is not understood to be an essential part of what it is to be married."

But it's worth considering just how recently—and how haphazardly—Americans closed "the debate . . . about detaching marriage from parenthood." For most of American history, republican marriage remained the reigning paradigm: a self-reliant and child-centered couple, who had freely chosen each other in a spirit of equality and mutual affection and who would pass on to their young not just property but also the qualities needed to live in freedom. That reign only came to an end in the late 1960s as divorce laws loosened and Americans began pulling off their wedding rings at record rates.

Divorce is such a conundrum for the nation because it follows directly from American principles even while threatening to subvert them. During the Revolutionary era, marriage theorists understood that a nation that loves liberty had to tolerate some divorce; if it was a matter of principle that you chose to enter into wedlock, it was also a matter of principle that you had to have some way of choosing to get out, at least under some circumstances. A number of early writers—including Thomas Paine, whose problems with Mrs. Paine gave him a personal stake in the issue—urged Americans to take a tolerant approach toward the practice. Still, even though divorce was more accepted in this country than in many parts of the world, it remained rare, a last resort and one that worried people deeply. That was no longer the case by the late 1960s, when squeamishness on the subject evaporated, the marital exit door flew open, and not only the battered and the miserable but also the merely unfulfilled came pouring out.

This shift was a threat to republican marriage for reasons that went beyond a mushrooming population of newly single mothers scraping together funds to pay their rent or their babysitters, while their children trekked across the country to visit Dad every school vacation. The soaring rates of divorce signaled a fundamental transformation in the American idea of marriage. As Americans crowded into the divorce courts, they were casting aside the complex—and demanding—vision of the Founders. Marriage was becoming a minimalist institution; people now thought of it as an intimate relationship between two adults, having little to do with children and nothing to do with propagating the political and moral culture.

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This demand for a fuller recognition of the individual rights of spouses who sought divorce, along with the loosening relationship between child rearing and marriage—both necessary precursors for gay marriage—led inexorably to a further development. If marriage was simply a personal relationship between adults and had little to do with child rearing, Americans wondered, then what was the problem with a woman's having a baby if she wasn't wearing a ring? The answer could only be that there was none.

What did the law have to say about this cultural revolution, given the state's interest in protecting marriage as the institution in which children are raised? The courts, in all their wisdom, decided that safeguarding marriage wasn't their job any more. In case after case, judges decreed that marriage was an ordinary civil contract and that marriage and child rearing were legally unconnected. Never mind that American law and policy had always accepted the traditional assumption that marriage laws centered largely on the relationship between generations. That was history. In the 1972 *Stanley* v. *Illinois* case, to cite just one of many examples, the Supreme Court decided that custody laws distinguishing wed and unwed fathers were "constitutionally repugnant." Fathers who had never married their child's mother should have the same rights as those who had. More recently, the prestigious American Law Institute recommended that state family law be updated to treat cohabiting parents as virtually identical to married parents in the event of a breakup. Sometimes parents marry; sometimes they don't. Why should the state care?

Many have interpreted these legal innovations as part of the "long tradition of reforming marriage" in America that includes giving wives more rights over their own property as well as the repeal of miscegenation laws. They were no such thing. Unlike the changes in the treatment of blacks and women, which more fully expressed the Founders' ideals, the divorce revolution and the consequent change in thinking about marriage and child rearing represented a hard turn away from the original republican model.

Widespread divorce and illegitimacy fracture into pieces the Founders' ideals of the self-governing family. Republican marriage had been a great experiment to harness a universal family bond into the service of a particular view of human freedom. Every society has some kind of marriage to tie parents and their offspring together, but only the American form of marriage strove to allow individuals the greatest amount of freedom within that tie. Little did the Founders expect that their most treasured ideal, freedom, would eventually be turned against the institution that they most prized for promoting that liberty by nurturing free citizens.

No one knows the personal destruction wrought during this history better than the children who were its victims. For the generation now in its twenties and thirties, the sundering of child rearing and marriage was not part of the musty past; it was a bitter and lived reality. The world they grew up in was a scary, unpredictable place of self-absorbed adults who had a habit of disappearing, only to pop up from time to time with a stranger introduced as a new member of the family.

That's not the world they want for their own children. Few of them are familiar with founding thinkers like James Wilson or John Adams, but they know enough to see that the family life the Founders had in mind was better than the one they endured. Yankelovich Partners found in one poll that almost three-quarters of Gen Xers—that is, adults in their late twenties and thirties—said they'd favor a return to more traditional standards in family life, though only a little over a half of their boomer parents agree. Knowing firsthand what it feels like when your father sits you down at the kitchen table and, unable to look you in the eye, says, "Your mother and I don't love each other any more"—and knowing from personal experience that their own capacity for stable relationships is shaky as a result—this generation questions a regime of drive-through divorces. A 1994 study by the National Opinion Research Center found that Gen Xers were the age group least likely to say that divorce is the best option for troubled couples. Young parents in their twenties and thirties are "nostalgic for the childhood that boomers supposedly had," as

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American Demographics has put it. "It's informed their model of the perfect, traditional marriage."

So what are we to make of the fact that these mom-and-apple-pie young people tend to be more in favor of gay marriage than their parents and grandparents are? The great irony is that their traditionalism enlarges their sympathy for gays' hunger for 'til-death-do-us-part commitment; after all, that's what's they want, too. Odd as it sounds, gays and the children who grew up in single-parent homes share the experience of standing outside and looking longingly through the window at the peaceful, Norman Rockwell family reading or playing Scrabble in front of the fireplace. Rauch and Sullivan, in particular, have written touchingly of marriage as a solemn, even spiritual, union, a momentous public vow to another person that comes with profound responsibilities and aspires to transcendence. If you add together young people's earnest devotion to marriage and their interest in the civil rights movement (insofar as they have studied any American history at all, it's likely to begin with Rosa Parks and end with Martin Luther King), you have a generation for which gay marriage seems merely commonsensical.

But what the young neo-traditionalists have trouble understanding is that their embrace of the next civil rights revolution, as many of them are inclined to see the fight for gay marriage, is actually at war with their longing for a more stable domestic life. Gay marriage gives an enfeebled institution another injection of the toxin that got it sick in the first place: it reinforces the definition of marriage as a loving, self-determining couple engaging in an ordinary civil contract that has nothing to do with children. That's no way for marriage to get its gravitas back. It is marriage's dedication to child rearing, to a future that projects far beyond the passing feelings of a couple, that has the potential to discipline adult passion. "The gravity of marriage as an institution comes from its demand that love be negotiated through these larger responsibilities [surrounding procreation]," Shelby Steele has written in response to Andrew Sullivan. Ignore those responsibilities and you get, well, you get the marital meltdown that this generation was hoping to transform.

There is another reason to be skeptical about the idea that gay marriage is another step forward in an unbroken history of social progress. In fact, the fraying of the marriage–child rearing bond over the past decades has been a step backward: it has increased poverty and inequality. Too often, single-parent families, whether divorced or never married, are poor—and very much poorer than their two-earner counterparts. Instead of being the self-reliant units the Founders envisioned, too many of them are dependent on a powerful nanny state, either for welfare payments or for determining custody and tracking down child support. And instead of being the self-governing institutions of republican theory, nurturing sturdy, self-governing citizens, too many single-parent families, as many studies have shown, bring up kids who as adults do markedly less well on average in school, career, and marriage than those who grew up in intact two-parent families. As for children of never-married mothers: many of them make up the permanent underclass, and their high rates of crime, school failure, and welfare dependency are everything that the Founders expected the republican family to prevent. That so many of these families are black would make the Reconstruction architects of the Freedmen's Bureau weep.

Think of the past several decades of high rates of divorce and illegitimacy as a kind of natural experiment testing the truth of the Founders' vision. The results are in: if we forget that marriage is both a voluntary union between two loving partners *and* an arrangement for rearing the next generation of self-reliant citizens, our capacity for self-government weakens.

Alongside the familiar anthropological truth that marriage comes in many forms is another truth you don't hear about so much: different kinds of marriage—not to mention non-marriage—mold different kinds of individuals. The Founders envisioned a very specific sort of institution, one that would nourish a republic of equal, self-governing citizens. The evolution of marriage over the past 40 years has undermined that vision. Gay marriage threatens to sabotage it even further. ■

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Redefining Marriage Away

What would be left of marriage if we adopt the gay advocates' proposals?

Robert P. George & David L. Tubbs

Conservative advocates of same-sex marriage insist that their goal is not a radical alteration of the institution itself. They favor the legal recognition of same-sex partnerships as marriages in order to secure "equal rights," they say. Their goal in redefining marriage is not to weaken or abolish it but to expand access to it, while leaving its core features intact. Far from harming marriage, they contend, the move to same-sex marriage would strengthen the institution.

Though this argument has a certain superficial appeal, it is profoundly mistaken. The issue is not one of equality or the right to participate in a valuable social institution. What divides defenders of traditional marriage from those who would redefine it is a disagreement about the nature of the institution itself. Redefining marriage will, of course, fundamentally change the posture of law and public policy toward the meaning and significance of human sexuality, procreation, and the bond between the sexes. Even more important, there are powerful reasons to fear that the proposed redefinition of marriage will destabilize and undermine this already battered institution.

To understand the destabilizing effects, consider this scenario. A young man and woman are engaged to be married. A month before the wedding, the man approaches his fiancée to ask whether she will consider an "open marriage," in which they will free each other from the duty to be sexually faithful.

Even today, the man's proposal is shocking, and his bride-to-be will almost surely be horrified by it. Nearly everyone would say that what the man has

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proposed is something other than a true marriage, since the norm of sexual exclusivity within marriage is essential to the institution. That is why the overwhelming majority of couples entering marriage do not even discuss whether they will follow the norm; they simply accept it.

Do most American husbands and wives honor the principle of sexual exclusivity in practice? The best evidence says yes. In their rigorous and acclaimed 1994 study on American sexual behavior, University of Chicago sociologist Edward Laumann and his associates found that 65 to 85 percent of American men and more than 80 percent of American women (in every age group) had no sex partners other than their spouses while married. These figures are remarkable, especially if we recall the many ways in which popular culture has mocked or trivialized human sexuality and the demands of marriage in recent decades.

JON FEINGERSH/CORBIS

But do most same-sex couples accept the norm of sexual exclusivity? In a 1999 survey of such couples in Massachusetts, sociologist Gretchen Stiers found that only 10 percent of the men and 32 percent of the women thought that a "committed" intimate relationship entailed sexual exclusivity. An essay called "Queer Liberalism?" in the June 2000 *American Political Science Review* reviewed six books that discussed same-sex marriage. None of the six authors affirmed sexual exclusivity as a precondition of same-sex marriage, and most rejected the idea that sexual fidelity should be expected of "married" homosexual partners. For more than a decade, a wide array of authors who favor redefining marriage to include same-sex partners have advanced similar views. In a 1996 essay in the *Michigan Law Review*, University of Michigan law professor David Chambers even suggested that marriage should be redefined to include sexual unions of three or more people—so-called polyamorous relationships.

Honest activists admit this widespread rejection of exclusivity. Writing in 1997, journalist and activist Michelangelo Signorile used the terms "postmodern" monogamy and "emotional"

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monogamy to describe the living arrangements of many same-sex couples. As those adjectives suggest, such arrangements do not entail sexual exclusivity as a matter of principle. Signorile also noted that "a great many gay men" simply favor "open" partnerships.

While Signorile was describing "monogamy with a little breathing room," activists in the organization known as Sex Panic took a more radical line, ridiculing the aspiration to monogamy and other "small-town values." Sex Panic was largely composed of academic "queer theorists" (men as well as women), and according to journalist Caleb Crain, it defended "bathhouses, promiscuity, and anonymous sex" from "moralizing forces." More recently, Andrew Sullivan, a supposedly conservative advocate of same-sex marriage, has praised the alleged "spiritual value" of anonymous sex.

To outsiders, these views might be incomprehensible. Since the onset of AIDS, same-sex male couples would seemingly have an especially great incentive to embrace the norm of sexual exclusivity. The general unwillingness to do so is telling. Equally telling are accounts of rampant promiscuity among active male homosexuals before the AIDS epidemic, such as that provided by Randy Shilts in his 1987 best-seller *And the Band Played On*.

Some proponents of same-sex marriage believe that its legalization will help same-sex partners be sexually faithful. The evidence, however, suggests that acceptance of the norm of sexual exclusivity is a minority view among homosexuals in the United States and elsewhere. Furthermore, because intimate relations between persons of the same sex are inherently—and not merely contingently—unconnected to procreation, there is no principled reason to limit same-sex marriage to two persons. Thus, one can reasonably predict that same-sex marriage is going to be intrinsically unstable, as Sex Panic recognized in expressing its contempt for the institution. As if to confirm these points, the first same-sex couple to receive a marriage license in Provincetown, Massachusetts, told the press that they had an "open" marriage.

By contrast, the norm of sexual exclusivity within real marriage is both intelligible and morally sound. The norm originates in the sexual complementarity of a husband and wife as a biological unit, and it functions to increase the likelihood that children will be reared by their biological parents. The norm binds a man and a woman in a covenant of mutual support, premised on the duties of fidelity and exclusivity. The norm is also meant to reduce vulnerability—not only of children but also of mothers and pregnant women.

In response, some might take the line of Yale law professor William Eskridge, who asserts that traditional marriage is now more "relational" rather than "procreational." But this view is wrong. In the past century, roughly 90 percent of American women were married by the age of 30, and between 80 and 90 percent had at least one child by the age of 40.

For all these reasons, the legal recognition of same-sex partnerships as "marriages" is likely to destabilize further an institution already damaged by the casual acceptance of cohabitation and unwed childbearing, as well as by the high rate of divorce. If a desire to stamp social approval on homosexual conduct and relationships leads to a redefinition of marriage that detaches it not only from biological complementarity and procreation but also from the related norm of sexual exclusivity, what will be left of the institution?

It is often remarked that marriage tends to "civilize" sexuality—particularly male sexuality. Although the complete picture is more complex than that, there is truth in this remark. But there is no magic in a word. Redefining marriage means abolishing it and shifting the label to a new institution—one for which there are no grounds of principle for sexual exclusivity or monogamy. Thus redefined, marriage won't function to civilize anybody. If marriage is redefined out of existence, our entire society will be harmed, but the harm will be distributed unequally. In the libertine utopia of "sexual freedom," women and children will suffer the most. ■

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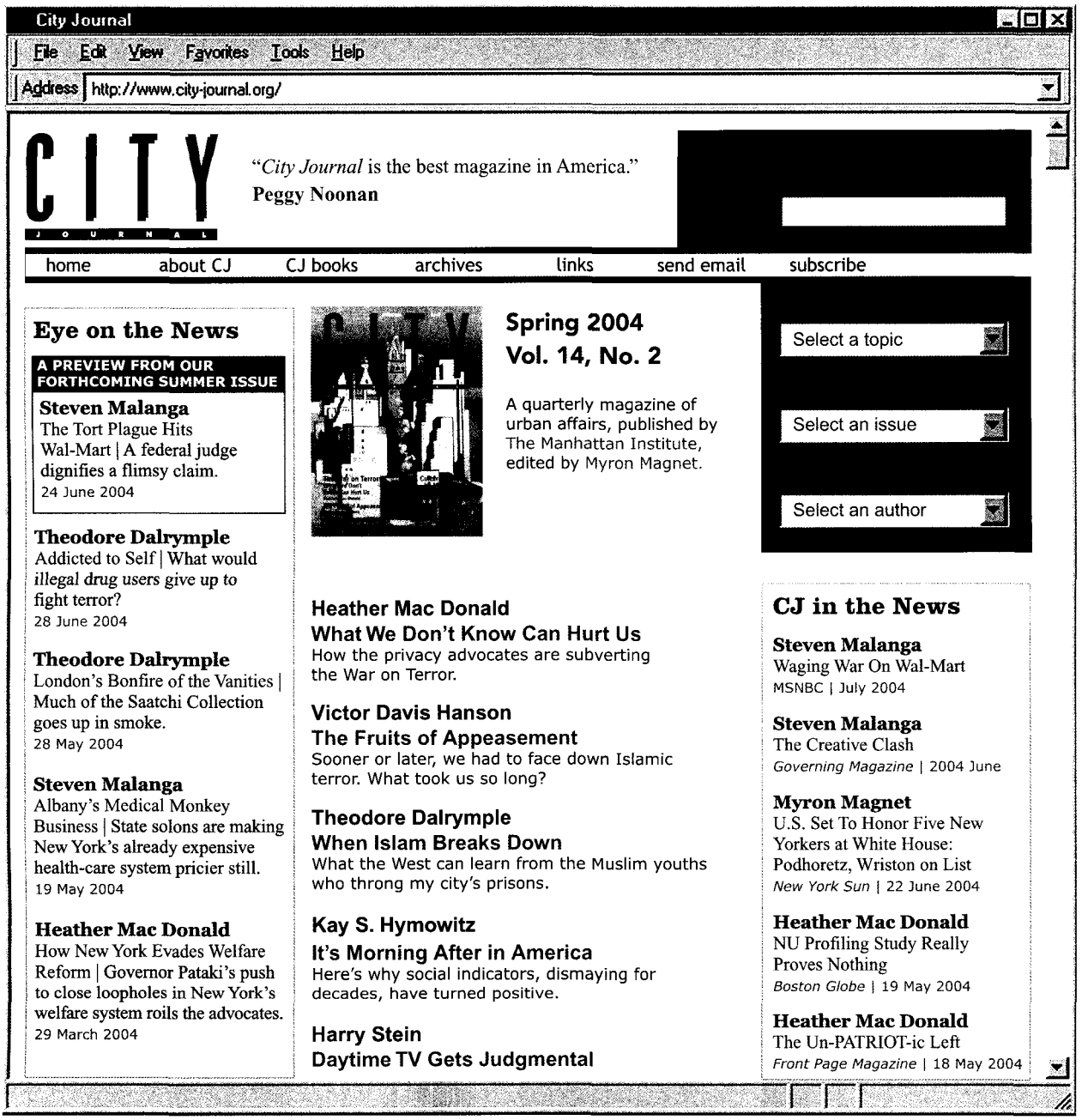
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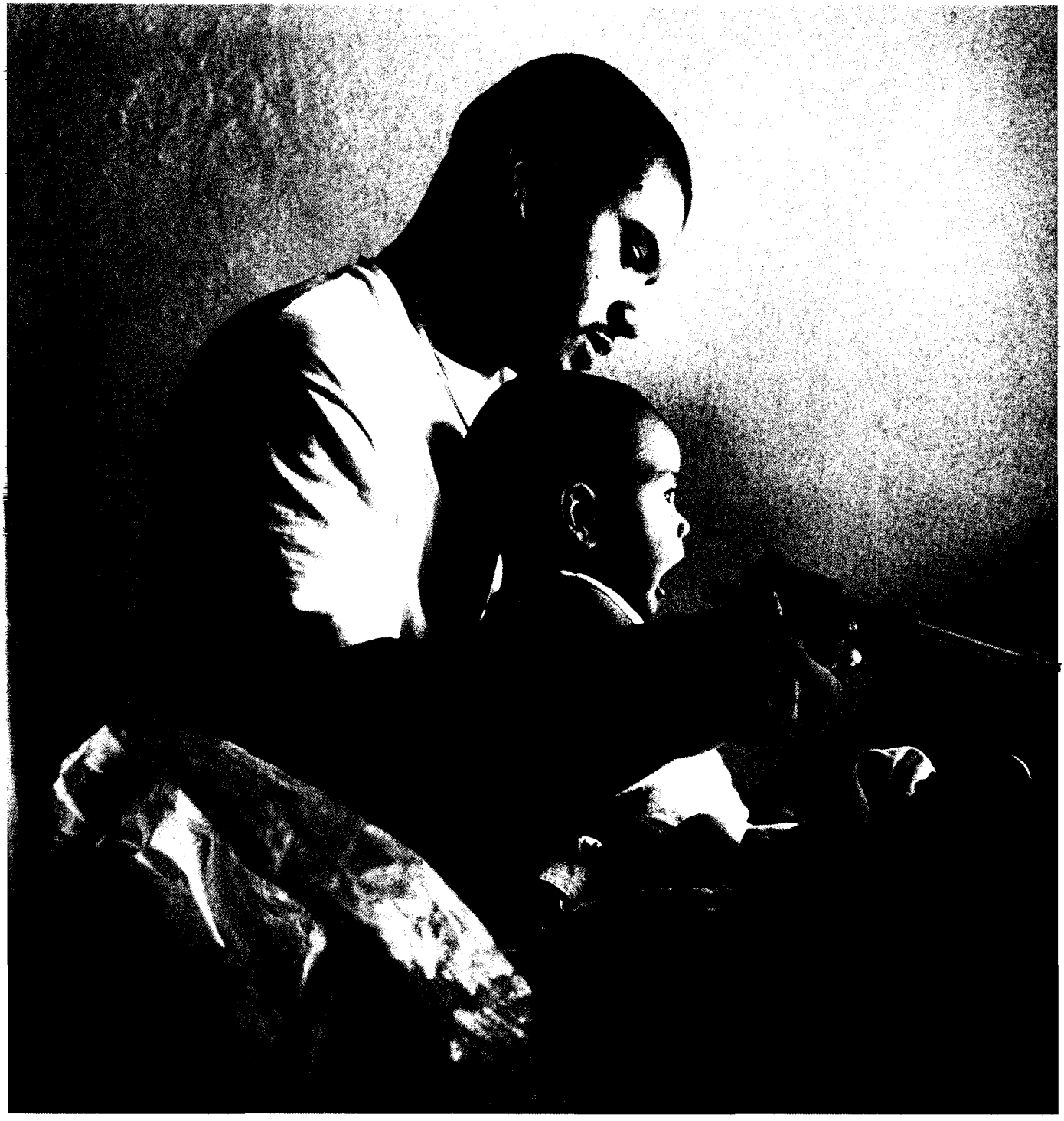
The Immigrant Gang Plague



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Hispanic gang violence is spreading across the country, the sign of a new underclass in the making.

ROBERT YAGER/SIPA PRESS

Heather Mac Donald

Before immigration optimists issue another rosy prognosis for America's multicultural future, they might visit Belmont High School in Los Angeles's overwhelmingly Hispanic, gang-ridden Rampart district. "Upward and onward" is not a phrase that comes to mind when speaking to the first- and second-generation immigrant teens milling around the school this January.

"Most of the people I used to hang out with when I first came to the school have dropped out," observes Jackie, a vivacious illegal alien from Guatemala. "Others got kicked out or got into drugs. Five graduated, and four home girls got pregnant."

Certainly, none of the older teens I met outside Belmont was on track to graduate. Jackie herself

The wrong kind of education: Los Angeles gang member Chava shows his nephew how to shoot.

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flunked ninth grade ("I used to ditch a lot," she explains) and never caught up. She is now pursuing a General Equivalency Diploma—a watered-down certificate for dropouts or expelled students—in the school's "adult" division. Vanessa, who sports a tiny horseshoe protruding from her nostrils, is applying to the adult division, too, having been kicked out of Belmont at age 18. "I didn't come to school very often," says this American-born child of illegal aliens from El Salvador. Her boyfriend, Albert, a dashing 19-year-old with long, slicked-back hair, got expelled for truancy but has talked his way back into the regular high school. "I have good manipulative skills," he smiles. After a robbery conviction, Albert was put on probation but broke every rule in the book: "Curfews, grades, attendance, missed court days," he boasts. "But they still let me off the hook."

These Belmont teens are no aberration. Hispanic youths, whether recent arrivals or birthright American citizens, are developing an underclass culture. (By "Hispanic" here, I mean the population originating in Latin America—above all, in Mexico—as distinct from America's much smaller Puerto Rican and Dominican communities of Caribbean descent, which have themselves long shown elevated crime and welfare rates.) Hispanic school dropout rates and teen birthrates are now the highest in the nation. Gang crime is exploding nationally—rising 50 percent from 1999 to 2002—driven by the march of Hispanic immigration east and north across the country. Most worrisome, underclass indicators like crime and single parenthood do not improve over successive generations of Hispanics—they worsen.

Debate has recently heated up over whether Mexican immigration—unique in its scale and in other important ways—will defeat the American tradition of assimilation. The rise of underclass behavior among the progeny of Mexicans and other Central Americans must be part of that debate. There may be assimilation going on, but a significant portion of it is assimilation downward to the worst elements of American life. To be sure, most Hispanics are hardworking, law-abiding residents; they have reclaimed squalid neighborhoods in South Central Los Angeles and elsewhere. Among the dozens of Hispanic youths I interviewed, several expressed gratitude for the United States, a sentiment that would be hard to find among the ordinary run of teenagers. But given the magnitude of present immigration levels, if only a portion of those from south of the border goes bad, the costs to society will be enormous.

The Soledad Enrichment Action Charter School in South Central Los Angeles is at the vortex of L.A.'s gang culture. Next door to a rose-colored, angel-bedecked church, the boxy school glowers behind barred gates like those that surround prisons. Soledad's students, about half blacks and half Hispanics, have been kicked out of other schools. They have brought violence with them. In early March, a gunman opened fire on 20 students entering the school at 7:30 AM, wounding two. Tensions were high again as school let out one day this April. A boy had been sent home earlier for fighting; the question now was, would he return to retaliate? The school's probation officer radioed the LAPD's 77th Division to plead for some officers to keep watch, without success. As the students, dressed in plain white T-shirts, filed out to the sidewalk, two burly security guards and a gang counselor warily eyed the street.

Asked about gangs, the teens proudly reel off their affiliations: SOK (Still Out Killing); HTO (Hispanics Taking Over); JMC (Just Mobbing Crazy). A cocky American-born child of Salvadoran parents says that most of his peers from the eighth grade are "locked up or dead." "Four are dead—three were shot, one was run over." Were you just lucky? I ask. "They were gangbanging more than me," says the 17-year-old, who won't give his name. "I try to control myself, respect my parents." That respect only goes so far. Asked if he's been in jail, he swaggers: "Yup, for GTA"—grand theft auto. And he has no intention of leaving his gang: "They're the homeys, part of the family."

Eighteen-year-old Eric, born here to an illegal Mexican and Guatemalan, is one of the few students I talked to who doesn't gangbang, though he is on probation for second-degree robbery, his second conviction. Half his friends from ele-

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Paralyzed by a shot in the neck, gang member Muneco observes his 21st birthday after two years on a respirator. He died three months later.

mentary school are involved in crime, he says. Of course, gang problems in Los Angeles schools are hardly confined to academies for delinquents like Soledad. Gang fights in some of L.A.'s regular high schools draw such crowds that youthful pickpockets have a field day working the spectators and participants. "People would steal your pagers and cell phones," reports one student who has bounced through several schools.

David O'Connell, pastor of the church next door to Soledad, has been fighting L.A.'s gang culture for over a decade. He rues the "ferocious stuff" that is currently coming out of Central America, sounding weary and pessimistic. But "what's more frightening," he says, "is the disengagement from adults." Hispanic children feel that they have to deal with problems themselves, apart from their parents, according to O'Connell, and they "do so in violent ways." The adults, for their part, start to fear young people, including their own children.

The pull to a culture of violence among Hispanic children begins earlier and earlier, O'Connell says. Researchers and youth workers across the country confirm his observation. In Chicago, gangs start recruiting kids at age nine, according to criminologists studying policing and social trends in the Windy City. The Chicago Community Policing Evaluation Consortium concluded that gangs have become fully integrated into Hispanic youth culture; even children not in gangs emulate their attitudes, dress, and self-presentation. The result is a community in thrall. Non-affiliated children fear traveling into unknown neighborhoods and sometimes drop out of school for lack of protection. Adults are just as scared. They may know who has been spray-painting their garage, for example, but won't tell the police for fear that their car will be torched in retaliation. "It's like we're in our own little jails that we can't leave," said a resident. "There isn't an uninfested place nearby."

Washington, D.C., reports the same "ever-younger" phenomenon. "Recruitment is starting early in middle school," says Lori Kaplan, head of D.C.'s Latin American Youth Center. With early recruitment comes a high school dropout rate of 50 percent. "Gang culture is gaining more recruits

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than our ability to get kids out," Kaplan laments. "We can get this kid out, but two or three will take his place." In May, an 18-year-old member of the Salvadoran Mara Salvatrucha gang used a machete to chop off four left fingers and nearly sever the right hand of a 16-year-old South Side Locos rival in the Washington suburbs.

Ernesto Vega, a 19-year-old Mexican illegal who grew up in New York City, estimates that most 12- to 14-year-old Mexicans and Mexican-Americans in New York are in gangs for protection. "If you're Mexican, you can't go to parties by yourself," he says. "People will ask, 'Who you down with? *Que barrio*?' They be checkin' you out. But if it's 20 of you, and 20 of them, then it's OK."

For some children, the choice is: get beat up once a week, or get beat up once to enter the gang. Others join for the prestige and sense of belonging. Mario Flores was one of them; he joined Santa Ana, California's, Westside Compadres. "When I was 13, I was like, 'Wow.' I wanted them to jump me," he says in the soft near-whisper of the cool. "They're like, 'You want to get down?' They got to jumping at you, they go to call you, 'Trips from Westside Comps'—you feel good."

Flores (or "Trips") is a depressing specimen of gang culture: uneducated and barely articulate. He's sitting on the other side of a Plexiglas window in the Santa Ana Central Jail, talking to me over a phone. In and out of jail with dazzling regularity over the last three years, he most recently left prison on April 14; on April 21, he was arrested again on a rape charge. Born in Portland, Oregon, but raised in Mexico, Flores went to live with cousins in San Bernardino, California, at age 13 and has been traveling the Southern California gang circuit—Riverside County, Santa Ana, East L.A.—ever since. Now 20, he is slender and finely chiseled. Gang hand gestures accompany his speech like hieroglyphics. "When I saw gang members," he says, pointing first to his eyes, then outward, "they're like, 'Are you down with my shit?' 'I'm down!' " I ask if he speaks English or Spanish with his gang. "You speak Chicano," he says. " 'Hey, homey! You mostly talk English, you've got some good words. But the way you talk, you don't talk good. You don't talk like other people."

Flores expresses the fierce attachment to territory that is the sine qua non of gang identity. "I was like, 'I love my neighborhood. If you don't love my neighborhood, I'm going to fuck you up.' " Charles Beck, captain of the LAPD's Rampart Division, marvels at this emotion. "They all come from identical neighborhoods, identical families, and go to identical schools, and yet they hate each other with a passion." The territorial instincts can only be compared to the Balkans, says Corporal Kevin Ruiz, a Santa Ana gang investigator. "There's people who all they do is patrol gang boundaries. They're like me, in a way: I'm looking for bad guys; they look for rivals."

"Trips" showed his love for Santa Ana's Westside Compadres by doing "missions"—robbing bars, stealing wallets and cell phones, selling drugs—to raise money for the gang. "If a big homey told me to fuck someone up, I had to," he explains. The gang reciprocated by giving him a place to stay—when he was bringing in cash. Otherwise he lived in cars or on the street, sometimes in a hotel.

The chance that Flores will ever become a productive member of society is slight. Routinely kicked out of high school for fighting, he lacks rudimentary skills. Like many prisoners, he claims to be reading the Bible and thanking Jesus, but such prison conversions rarely last. His personal life is troubled: "My lady, she mad at me"—not surprisingly, given his most recent rape charge—and Flores is not certain she will be waiting for him when he gets out of jail. Most likely, Flores will continue contributing to the Hispanicization of prisons in California: in 1970, Hispanics were 12 percent of the state's population and 16 percent of new prison admits; by 1998, they were 30 percent of the California population, and 42 percent of new admits.

Even as it reaches down to ever-younger recruits, gang culture is growing more lethal. In April, 16-year-old Valentino Arenas drove up to a courthouse in Pomona, California, and shot to death a randomly chosen California Highway

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Patrol officer, in the hope of gaining entry to Pomona's 12th Street Gang. The assassination wouldn't surprise Dennis Farrell, a Nassau County, New York, homicide detective. "We're amazed at the openness of shootings," he says. "When we do cases with Hispanic gangs, we often get full statements of admission, almost like they don't see what's the big deal."

The unwritten code that moderated gang violence three or four decades ago has now fallen away. "When I grew up," says Santa Ana native and gang investigator Kevin Ruiz, "there were rules of engagement: no shooting at churches or at home. Now, no one is immune." One of Ruiz's colleagues on the Santa Ana police force, Mona Ruiz (no relation), spent her adolescence in Santa Ana gangs; now she tries to get kids out. "Back then," she says, "if someone got jumped, you responded with fistfights, not guns. Guns started in the 1980s." Earlier gangbangers even showed a certain fastidiousness of dress: "Guys used to iron their jeans for two hours," Mona Ruiz recalls. "Then they wouldn't sit down" to avoid marring the crease. All that changed when heroin hit, she says.

"Many cops and youth workers blame the increase in gang appeal on the disintegration of the Hispanic family."

The constant invasion of illegal aliens is worsening gang violence as well. In Phoenix, Arizona, and surrounding Maricopa County, illegal alien gangs, such as Brown Pride and Wetback Power, are growing more volatile and dangerous, according to Tom Bearup, a former sheriff's department official and current candidate for sheriff. Even in prison, where they clash with American Hispanics, they are creating a more vicious environment.

Upward mobility to the suburbs doesn't necessarily break the allure of gang culture. An immigration agent reports that in the middle-class suburbs of southwest Miami, second- and third-generation Hispanic youths are perpetrating home invasions, robberies, battery, drug sales, and rape. Kevin Ruiz knows students at the University of California, Irvine who retain their gang connections. Prosecutors in formerly crime-free Ventura County, California, sought an injunction this May against the Colonia Chiques gang after homicides rocketed up; an affidavit supporting the injunction details how Chiques members terrorize the local hospital whenever one of the gang arrives with a gunshot wound. Federal law enforcement officials in Virginia are tracking with alarm the spread of gang violence from Northern Virginia west into the Shenandoah Valley and south toward Charlottesville, a trend so disturbing that they secured federal funds this May to stanch the mayhem. "This is beyond a regional problem. It is, in fact, a national problem," said FBI assistant director Michael Mason, head of the bureau's Washington field office.

Open-borders apologists dismiss the Hispanic crime threat by observing that black crime rates are even higher. True, but irrelevant: the black population is not growing, whereas Hispanic immigration is reaching virtually every part of the country, sometimes radically changing local demographics. With a felony arrest rate up to triple that of whites, Hispanics can dramatically raise community crime levels.

Many cops and youth workers blame the increase in gang appeal on the disintegration of the Hispanic family. The trends are worsening, especially for U.S.-born Hispanics. In California, 67 percent of children of U.S.-born Hispanic parents lived in an intact family in 1990; by 1999, that number had dropped to 56 percent. The percentage of Hispanic children living with a single mother in California rose from 18 percent in 1990 to 29 percent in 1999. Nationally, single-parent households constituted 25 percent of all Hispanic households with minor children in 1980; by 2000, the proportion had jumped to 34 percent.

The trends in teen parenthood—*the* marker

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of underclass behavior—will almost certainly affect the crime and gang rate. Hispanics now outrank blacks for teen births; Mexican teens have higher birthrates than Puerto Ricans, previously the most "ghettoized" Hispanic subgroup in terms of welfare use and out-of-wedlock child-rearing. In 2002, there were 83.4 births per 1,000 Hispanic females between ages 15 and 19, compared with 66.6 among blacks, 28.5 among non-Hispanic whites, and 18.3 among Asians. Perhaps these young Hispanic mothers are giving birth as wives? Unlikely. In California, where Latina teens have the highest birthrate of teens in any state, 79 percent of teen births to U.S.-born Latinas in 1999 were to unmarried girls.

According to the many young Hispanics I spoke to, more and more girls are getting pregnant. "This year was the worst for pregnancies," says Liliana, an American-born senior at Manual Arts High School near downtown Los Angeles. "A lot of girls get abortions; some drop out." Are girls ashamed when they get pregnant? I wonder. "Not at all," Liliana responds. Among Hispanic teens, at least, if not among their parents, the stigma of single parenthood has vanished. I asked Jackie, the Guatemalan GED student at L.A.'s Belmont High, if her pregnant friends subsequently got married. She guffawed. George, an 18-year-old of Salvadoran background who was kicked out of Manual Arts six months ago for a vicious fight, estimates that most girls at the school are having sex by age 16.

Mexican and Central American immigration to New York City is of much more recent vintage than in California, but young Mexicans in New York have quickly assimilated to underclass sexual behavior. Nineteen-year-old Ernesto Vega reports that his oldest sister dropped out of school at 17 and got pregnant the next year. "I heard her boyfriend came from Mexico to work, but he wasn't working. He was on the street." Ernesto says. Then the boyfriend got arrested, probably on drug charges. "He says he was arrested for doing nothing, but they don't arrest you for doing nothing."

Ernesto knows three or four Mexican-American girls with babies, including a 16-year-old with two daughters. "Another just got pregnant this year," he says. "She's 15." None is married. None has a GED or will go to college. As for the fathers of their children? "The boys be leaving the girls alone," Vega says. "The boy goes away."

Some Hispanic parents valiantly try to impose old-fashioned consequences on teen pregnancies, but they are losing the battle. Vega's father, a building superintendent and hardware store clerk, angrily told his pregnant daughter, according to Vega: "You gotta go live with [the boyfriend]. I now want nothing to do with you!" The boyfriend offered to take the girl into the apartment he was sharing with a female acquaintance, but she wanted her own place. Eventually, she persuaded her father to take her back, but only on the condition that she work. She now sells Yankee paraphernalia on the Grand Concourse in the Bronx.

Traditional and contemporary family values continued to clash throughout the pregnancy. Although the boyfriend vanished until the birth, he showed up at Vega's house with his whole family when the girl returned from the hospital with her newborn. "He took his three sisters and his mother; one sister took the nephews." Vega recalls. The boyfriend's demand: you have to decide where to live. The girl told him to take a hike. The family delegation, Vega judges, already adapting to American individualist norms, was inappropriate. "The problem was not with the families," he says, "but between him and her."

In one respect, Central American immigrants break the mold of traditional American underclass behavior: they work. Even so, Mexican welfare receipt is twice as high as that of natives, in large part because Mexican-American incomes are so low, and remain low over successive generations. Disturbingly, welfare use actually rises between the second and third generation—to 31 percent of all third-generation Mexican-American households. Illegal Hispanics make liberal use of welfare, too, by putting their American-born children on public assistance: in Orange County, California, nearly twice as many Hispanic welfare cases are for children of illegal aliens as for legal families.

More troublingly, some Hispanics combine work with gangbanging. Gang detectives in Long

TONY FREEMAN/PHOTOEDIT INC

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Counterexamples: the neat, well-tended houses in Santa Ana, California's Hispanic neighborhoods embody Hispanic success.

Island's Suffolk County know when members of the violent Salvadoran MS-13 gang get off work from their lawn-maintenance or pizzeria jobs, and can follow them to their gang meetings. Mexican gang members in rural Pennsylvania, which saw two gang homicides in late April, also often work in landscaping and construction.

On the final component of underclass behavior—school failure—Hispanics are in a class by themselves. No other group drops out in greater numbers. In Los Angeles, only 48 percent of Hispanic ninth-graders graduate, compared with a 56 percent citywide graduation rate and a 70 percent nationwide rate. In 2000, nearly 30 percent of Hispanics between the ages of 16 and 24 were high school dropouts nationwide, compared with about 13 percent of blacks and about 7 percent of whites.

The constant inflow of barely literate recent Mexican arrivals unquestionably brings down Hispanic education levels. But later American-born generations don't brighten the picture much. While Mexican-Americans make significant education gains between the first and second generation, adding 3.5 years of schooling, progress stalls in the next generation, economists Jeffrey Grogger and Stephen Trejo have found. Third-generation Mexican-Americans remain three times as likely to drop out of high school than whites and one and a half times as likely to drop out as blacks. They complete college at one-third the rate of whites. Mexican-Americans are assimilating not to the national schooling average, observed the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas this June, but to the dramatically lower "Hispanic average." In educational outcomes, concluded the bank, "Ethnicity matters."

No one knows why this is so. Every parent I spoke to said that she wanted her children to do well in school and go to college. Yet the message is often not getting across. "Hispanic parents are the kind of parents that leave it to others," explains an unwed Salvadoran welfare mother in Santa Ana. "We don't get that involved." A news director of a Southern California Spanish radio station expresses frustration at the passivity toward education and upward mobility he sees in his own family. "I tried to knock the 'Spanglish'

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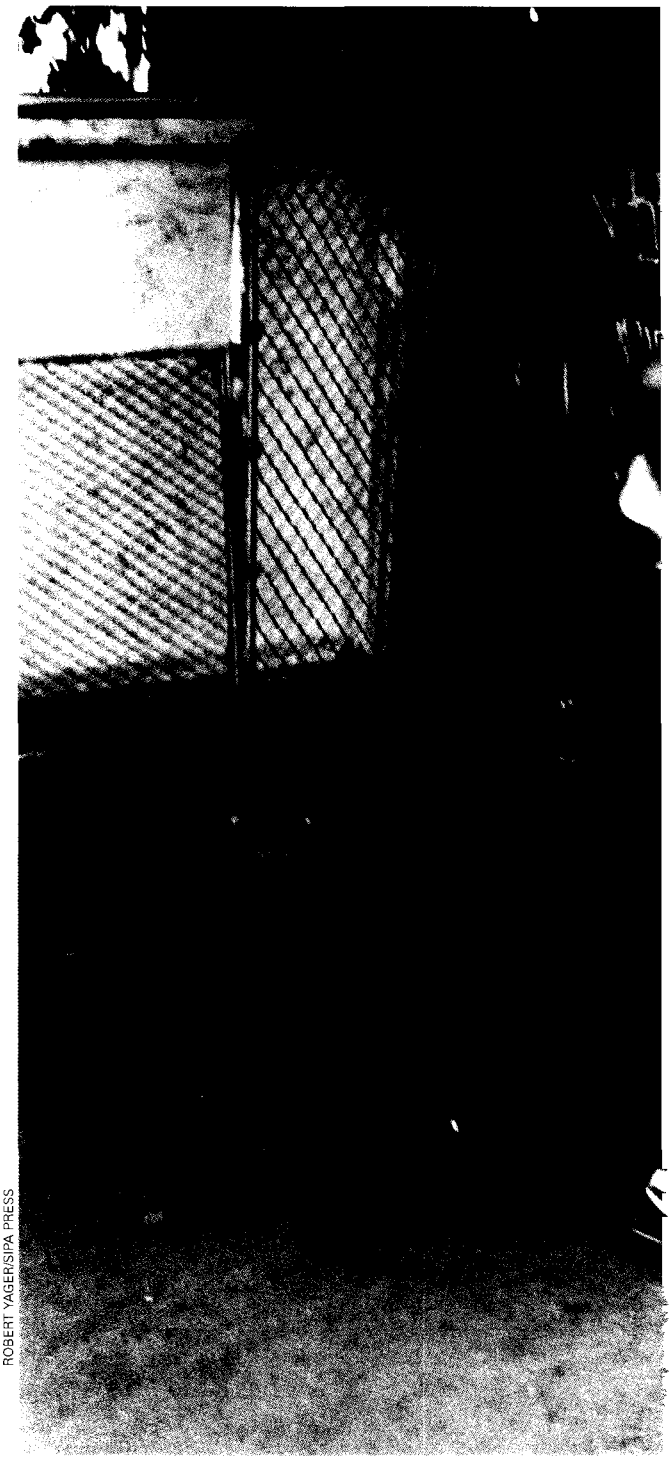
accent out of my niece and get rid of that crap," he says. "But the mother was completely nihilistic about her child. It's going to take direct action from Americans to Americanize Hispanics."

Perhaps the answer to the disconnect between stated parental goals and educational outcomes lies in Hispanic culture's traditional suspicion of education. Santa Ana police officer Mona Ruiz recounts a joke told by comedian George Lopez: "When a white person graduates, people say, 'You did good.' When a Mexican graduates, people say, 'You think you're better than us.' " The lure of an immediate income often proves more compelling than a four- to eight-year investment in self-improvement. New Yorker Ernesto Vega says he knows "Mexicans with papers" who drop out of high school. "They young. They say, 'I'm going to start working, I don't need school.' " But Vega has no illusions about the consequences: "Even with papers, you're only making $300 a week as a delivery boy in restaurants, because you don't know anything else."

Proponents of unregulated immigration simply ignore the growing underclass problem among later generations of Hispanics, with its attendant gang involvement and teen pregnancy. When pressed, open-borders advocates dismiss worries about the Hispanic future with their favorite comparison between Mexicans and Italians. Popularized by political analyst Michael Barone in *The New Americans*, the analogy goes like this: a century ago, Italian immigrants anticipated the Mexican influx, above all in their disregard for education. They dropped out of school in high numbers—yet they eventually prospered and joined the mainstream. Therefore, argue Barone and others, Mexicans will, too.

But the analogy is flawed. To begin with, the magnitude of Mexican immigration renders all historical comparisons irrelevant, as Harvard historian Samuel Huntington argues in his latest book, *Who Are We?*. In 2000, Mexicans constituted nearly 30 percent of the foreign-born population



ROBERT YAGER/SIPA PRESS

L.A. gangbangers initiate a new member by "jumping him in."

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in the U.S.; the next two largest groups were the Chinese (5 percent) and Filipinos (4 percent). By contrast, at the turn of the twentieth century, the largest immigrant group, Germans, made up only 15 percent of the foreign-born population. In 1910, Great Britain, Germany, Ireland, and Italy, in that order, sent the most migrants to the U.S.; Italians made up only 17 percent of the combined total. English-speakers made up over half the new arrivals; there was no chance that Italian would become the dominant language in any part of the country. By contrast, half of today's immigrants speak Spanish.

Equally important, the flow of newcomers came to an abrupt halt after World War I and did not resume until 1965. This long pause allowed the country ample opportunity to Americanize the foreign-born and their children. Today, no end is in sight to the migration from Mexico and its neighbors, which continually reinforces Mexican culture in American Hispanic communities and seems likely to do so for decades into the future.

Contemporary Hispanic immigration also differs from the classic Ellis Island model in that the ease of cross-border travel and communication allows Mexican and Central American immigrants to keep at least one foot planted in their native land. Meanwhile, the Mexican government does everything it can to bind Mexican migrants psychologically to the home country, in order to safeguard the annual $12 billion flow of remittances. It encourages dual nationality, and Mexicans in the U.S. can now run for office in Mexico. A Yolo County, California, tomato farmer has already been elected mayor of Jerez. Not surprisingly, Mexicans and other Central Americans have the lowest rates of naturalization of all immigrants—less than 30 percent in 1990, compared with two-thirds of qualified immigrants from major European sending countries, the Philippines, and Hong Kong.

Even Mexico's former foreign minister, Jorge Castaneda, acknowledges the unprecedented character of Hispanic immigration. "Mexican immigration," he wrote recently, "does have distinctive traits that do make [assimilation] difficult, if not impossible. This is . . . a matter of history." That "history" holds that the U.S. robbed Mexico of its natural territory in the nineteenth century, as some Mexican immigrants never seem to forget. "It's kind of scary," says Santa Ana gang intervention officer Mona Ruiz. "I hear, 'I was here first; this used to be Mexico. You stole it from us.'" Mexican-American Ruiz is herself called a "traitor" for becoming Americanized.

While proponents of the "reconquista" of "Alta California" (as Mexican nationalists call the lost territory) are a small minority of Hispanic immigrants, a much larger proportion hold on to their Hispanic identities. Few of the American-born students I spoke to in Southern California identified themselves as "American." Many said they were "Mexican," "Latino," or "Mexican-American"—usages encouraged by the multicultural dogma in the schools, a far cry from the Americanization efforts of classrooms a century ago.

Michael Barone's Italian-Mexican comparison also ignores the differences between the U.S. economies of 1904 and 2004. While Italian dropouts in 1904 could make their way into the middle class by working in the booming manufacturing sector or plying their existing craftsman skills, that is far more difficult today, given the decline of factory jobs and the rise of the knowledge-based economy. As the limited education of Mexican-Americans depresses their wages, their sense of being stuck in an economic backwater breeds resentment. "The second generation becomes angry with America, as they see their fathers faltering," observes Cesar Barrios, an outreach worker for the Tepeyac Association, a social services agency for Mexicans in New York City. This resentment only increases the lure of underclass culture, with its rebellious rejection of conventional norms, according to Barrios. For this reason, he says, many young Mexicans "prefer to imitate blacks than white people."

The Spanish-language media, which reaches two-thirds of all Hispanics, reinforces the sense of grievance. Stories about America's cruelties to immigrants and the country's shocking failure to legalize illegal aliens dominate news coverage.

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A billboard for Los Angeles's Spanish newspaper *La Opinión* conveys the usual tone: "Justice," "Abuse," "Deportation," and other hot-button topics blare out in massive lettering.

Chicago provides a cautionary tale about high levels of Hispanic immigration combined with an ever more powerful underclass ethic. During the 1990s, the Hispanic population in Chicago grew 38 percent, to 754,000, and became increasingly concentrated in the city's barrios. Education levels and fluency in English dropped lower and lower, while serious crime, social disorder, and physical decay grew in direct proportion to the number of Spanish-speaking Latinos. After a neighborhood became more than 60 percent Latino, physical decay—including graffiti, trash-filled vacant lots, and abandoned cars—jumped disproportionately. By 2001, social pathology among Spanish-speaking Latinos was higher than for any other racial or ethnic group.

DAVID YOUNG-WOLFF/PHOTOEDIT, INC.

Hispanics now have the highest teen birthrate of any group in the country.

There are many counterexamples that show a salutary effect of Hispanic immigration. Santa Ana, California, at 76 percent Latino the most heavily Spanish-speaking city of its size in the country, has cleaned up the seedy bars from its downtown area and replaced them with palm trees and benches, in large part thanks to a newly created business improvement district. Many homes in Santa Ana's wealthier Mexican neighborhoods sport exuberant roses and bougainvillea in their front yards, and students I spoke to there wanted to become lawyers, architects, and medical technicians. In predominantly Mexican East Los Angeles, housing prices are soaring along with the rest of the Southern California housing market: a 1928 two-bedroom, one-bath bungalow with a lawn gone to seed was listed at $265,000 this April. And in increasingly Hispanic South Central L.A., tiny bodegas selling milk, diapers, and piñatas are replacing liquor stores.

Yet a seemingly innocuous block in Santa Ana can host five to eight households dedicated to gangbanging or drug sales. A front yard may be relatively trash-free; inside the house, a different matter entirely, says Santa Ana cop Kevin Ruiz. "I've been to three houses just this week where they made a mountain of trash in the backyard or changed their baby's diaper by throwing it over the couch. They don't use the indoor plumbing, while letting their dogs go to

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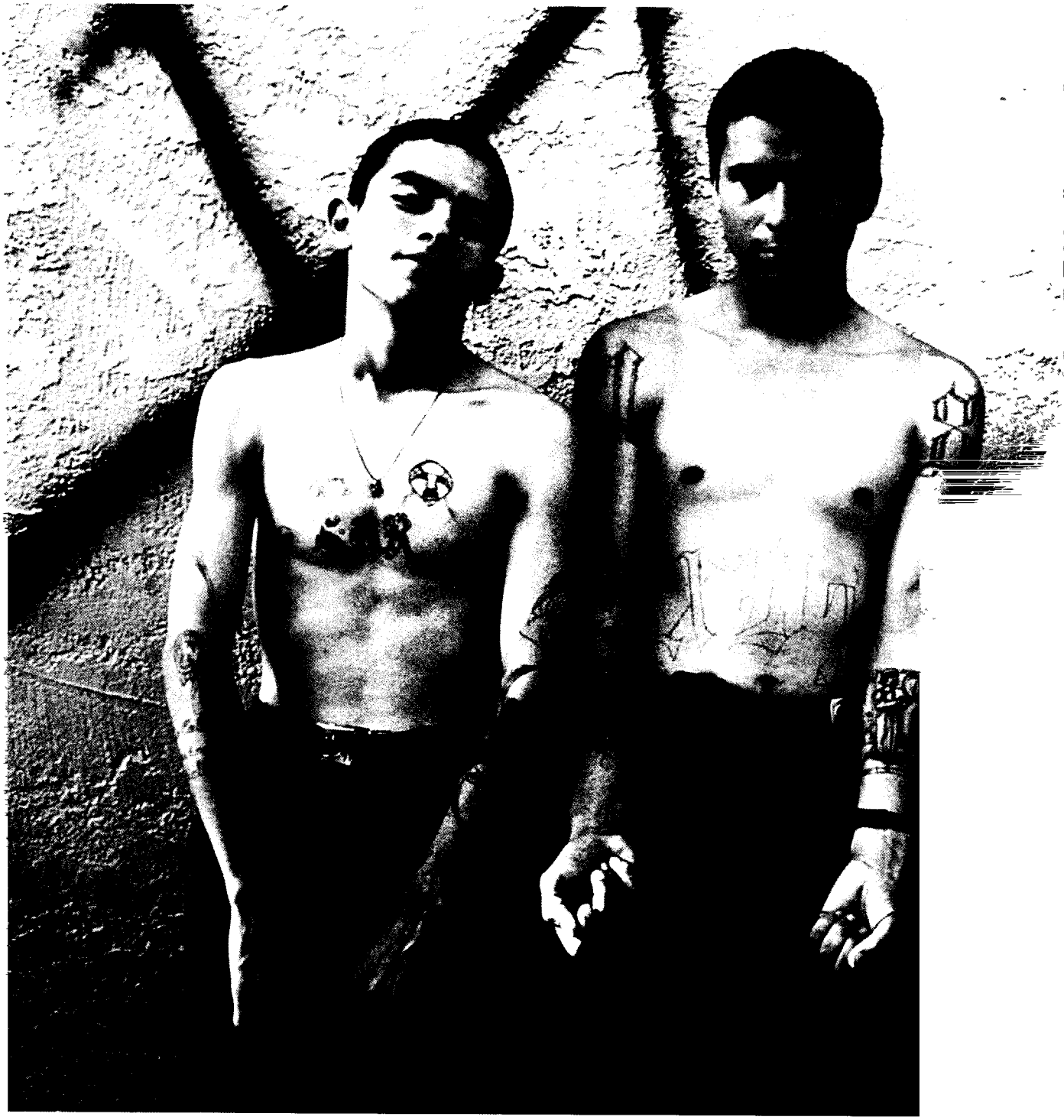

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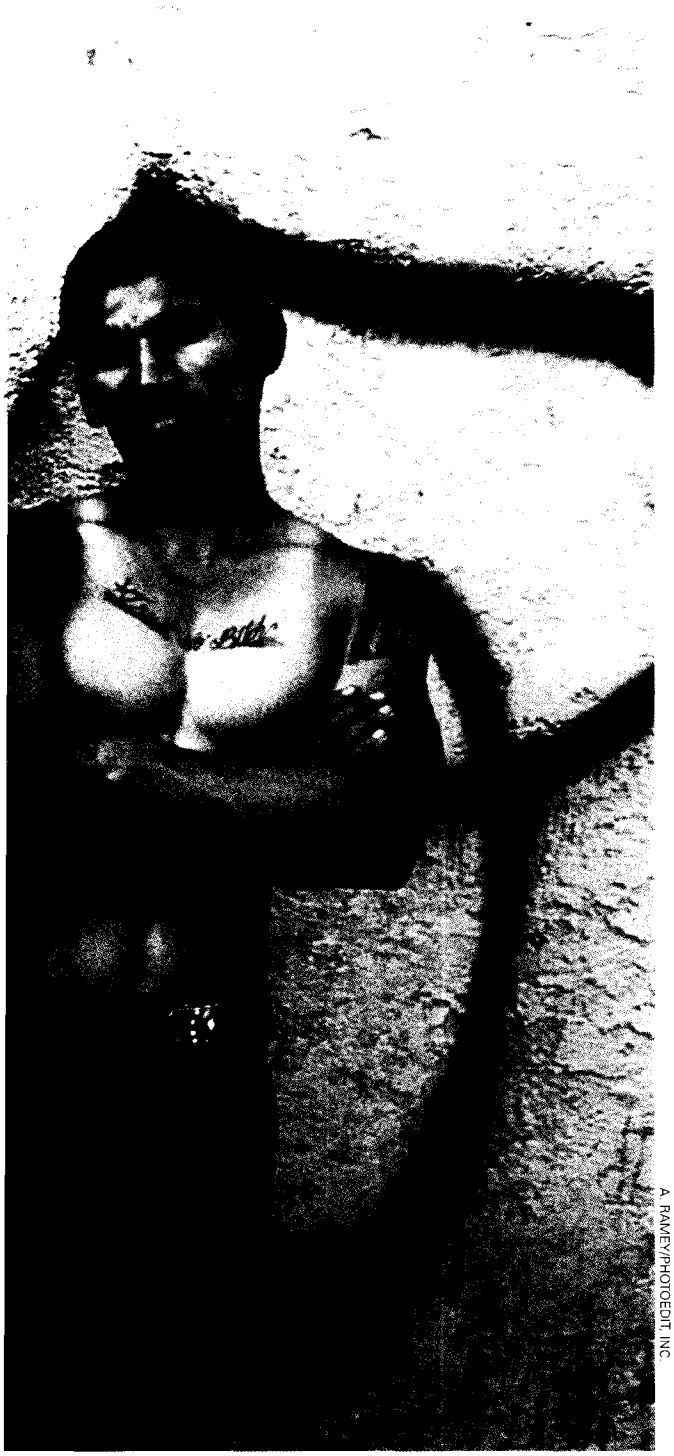

A. RAMEY/PHOTOEDIT, INC.

Increasingly, young Hispanic immigrants are assimilating to gang culture.

the bathroom on the carpet." Ruiz drives by the modest tract home where his Mexican father, who worked in Orange County's farming industry, raised him in the 1950s. A car with a shattered windshield, a trailer, and minivan sit in the backyard, surrounded by piles of junk and a mattress leaning on the garage door. "My mom taught us that even if you're poor, you should be neat," he says, shaking his head. Fifty-year-old men are still dressing like *chollos* (Chicano gangsters), Ruiz says, and fathers are ordering barbers to shave their young sons bald in good gang tradition.

Without prompting, Ruiz brings up the million-dollar question: "I don't see assimilation," he says. "They want to hold on [to Hispanic culture]." Ruiz thinks that today's Mexican immigrant is a "totally different kind of person" from the past. Some come with a chip on their shoulder toward the United States, he says, which they blame for the political and economic failure of their home countries. Rather than aggressively seizing the opportunities available to them, especially in education, they have learned to play the victim card, he thinks. Ruiz advocates a much more aggressive approach. "We need to explain, 'We'll help you assimilate up to a certain point, but then you have to take advantage of what's here.' "

Ruiz's observations will strike anyone who has hired eager Mexican and Central American workers as incredible. I pressed him repeatedly, insisting that Americans see Mexican immigrants as cheerful and hardworking, but he was adamant. "We're creating an underclass," he maintained.

Immigration optimists, ever ready to trumpet the benefits of today's immigration wave, have refused to acknowledge its costs. Foremost among them are skyrocketing gang crime and an expanding underclass. Until the country figures out how to reduce these costs, maintaining the current open-borders regime is folly. We should enforce our immigration laws and select immigrants on skills and likely upward mobility, not success in sneaking across the border. ■

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Why Queens Matters

This untrendy middle-class haven, throbbing with ambition again, is an economic and political boon to New York City.

Steven Malanga

With Manhattan the center of the universe, Brooklyn suddenly fashionable, the Bronx up-and-coming, and Staten Island basking in suburban peace, Queens, New York's third-largest borough, doesn't get much notice. It has never been dubbed a hot place to work or a cool place to live, and certainly it has never been a symbol of urban blight that needed to be saved with billions of urban-renewal dollars. Trendy technology companies spilling out of midtown Manhattan in the 1990s largely ignored Queens, while the hip, young creative

Main Street in thriving Flushing never noticed Gotham's recent recession.

Photographs by Harvey Wang

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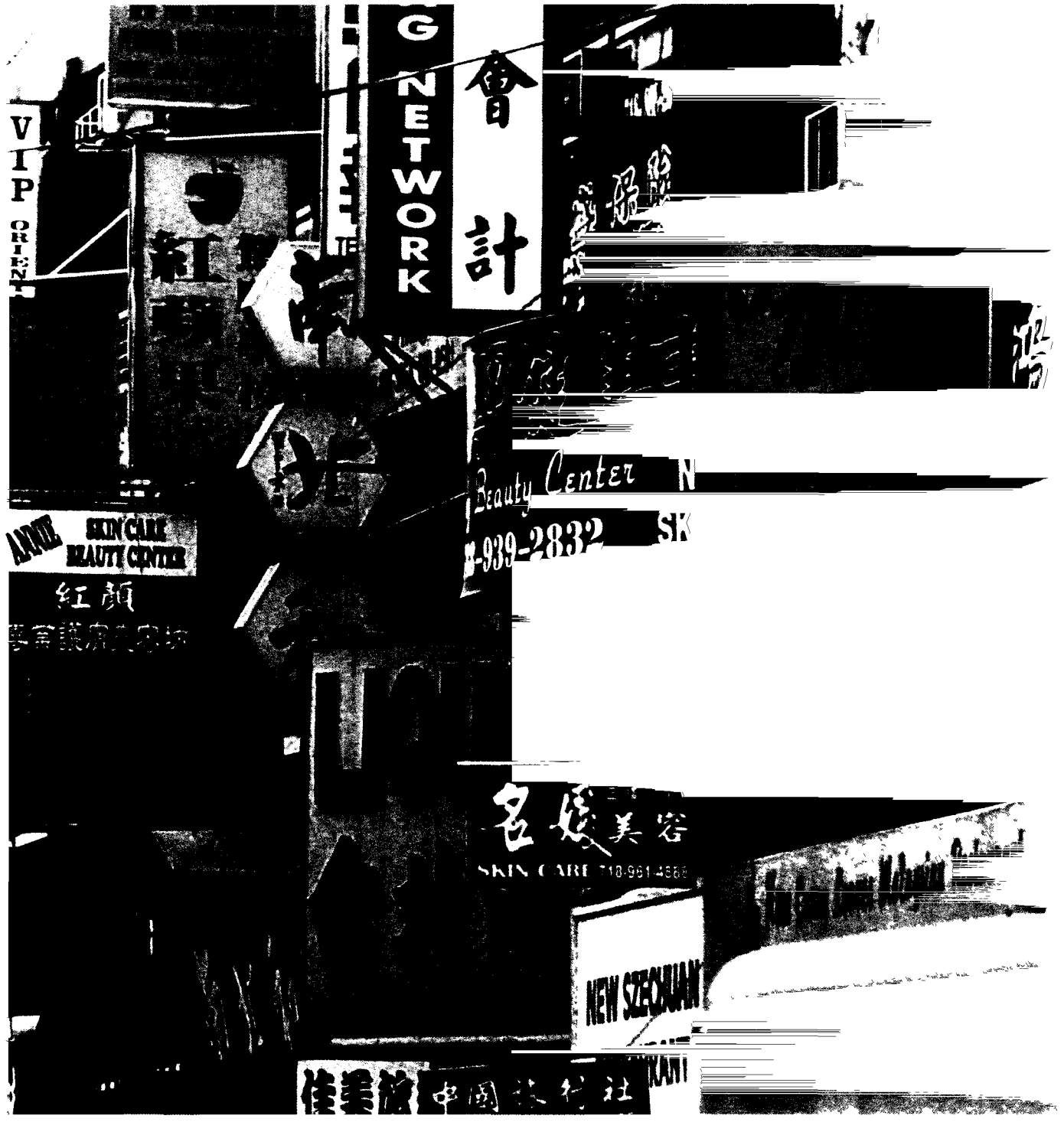

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workers who flocked to Gotham never even considered settling in family-oriented Queens when they could live downtown or in DUMBO.

But if Queens has often been overlooked, it should not be underestimated. In many ways, it is New York's most successful outer borough, far more adept at seamlessly blending neighborhood living and a thriving commercial life than the rest of Gotham or most other cities. Buttressed by a new generation of immigrants, Queens's economy is more diverse and less susceptible to wild swings than the rest of the city's. Its unemployment rate is substantially lower than the overall city rate; its labor-force participation rate is substantially higher. Though nearly half its residents are foreign-born, Queens can seem like Anywhere, USA: it boasts the largest number of owner-occupied homes in the five boroughs and the most two-parent families.

What accounts for Queens's success is exactly what makes it so often overlooked. Like the Queens of 50 to 100 years ago, the borough today gets its vitality from a generation of immigrants pursuing a better life by practicing such old-fashioned middle-class virtues as hard work, family involvement, assimilation, and civic participation. When fashionable urban theorists maintain that to succeed cities must attract hip, single workers and cutting-edge technology companies by investing in bike paths, rock-music festivals, and other amusements of bobo culture, Queens just seems too normal—too boring, even—to flourish. But its citizens—cast in the mold of earlier generations of Irish, German, Italian, and Jewish settlers—have created, or more precisely recreated, a thriving urban community of stable family neighborhoods bolstered by a powerful network of old-fashioned civic organizations.

As commentators on the Left and the Right worry that too many of our cities have become home only to the very rich and the very poor, Queens reminds us that cities were once a place for the middle class, too. Its many neighborhoods of neat, affordable residences provide a home to 345,000 people who work in Manhattan, staffing everything from Wall Street firms to medical offices to banks—people who, if not for Queens, would be living outside the city. These communities of shared values and ethnic solidarity, like so many New York neighborhoods of bygone times, are hothouses of upward mobility, whose residents boost the city's and the nation's economy as they assimilate and succeed.

As valuable as such neighborhoods and their residents are, in the 1960s New York's political class did its best to destroy the old Queens though high taxes, inattention to schools and crime, and bad social policy. Today, as New York's political culture lurches back toward the left, the city is again growing hostile to middle-class families and entrepreneurial business owners of the sort that Queens has in abundance. It's therefore worth remembering what Queens once was, and what almost destroyed it, as we take the measure of how powerful an economic and political force the new Queens has become.

The great immigration waves of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries spurred the transformation of Queens from a rural to an urban landscape, as prospering citizens of Manhattan and Brooklyn fled their increasingly crowded neighborhoods for more spacious and upscale housing in the borough. Before their arrival, Queens—settled in the mid-seventeenth century by Dutch and then English colonists as a loose collection of small towns with names like Vlissingen (present-day Flushing) and Rustdorp (Jamaica)—had grown but slowly, so that when consolidated with the other four boroughs as New York City in 1898, it held just 100,000 citizens, one-tenth the population of Brooklyn and one-fifteenth that of Manhattan. Sparked by immigration waves, Queens's population began filling in around former town hubs—most especially Long Island City, Newtown (today's Elmhurst), Flushing, and Jamaica—preserving a sense of local identity long after generations of new settlers had obliterated such boundaries in New York's more populous boroughs. By the 1920s, Queens's population had soared to nearly 470,000, and for the next 30 years, neither Depression nor war could slake the thirst for the better life that Queens's neighborhoods offered New Yorkers, as its population more than tripled to 1.5 million.

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As people poured in, developers responded with a dizzying array of construction. On what had only recently been farmland, builders erected row houses and six-family tenements in Ridgewood, modest three-bedroom brick homes in Cambria Heights, baronial mansions and neo-Georgian apartment buildings in Kew Gardens, all meant to accommodate one of the most diverse communities in America, with many residents just a few years removed from immigration. By the 1920s, in a central Queens community like Maspeth, one could purchase locally made butter at a German-owned grocery store, get a haircut from an Italian barber, and get one's horse tended to by a Polish-born blacksmith. By the 1930s, middle-class Jews fleeing Hitler's Europe were settling in Kew Gardens neighborhoods where Charlie Chaplin and Will Rogers had lived.

"Queens's economy is more diverse and less susceptible to wild swings than the rest of the city's."

Queens's commercial life followed much the same arc as its population growth. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, entrepreneurs seeking cheaper access to New York's harbor than they could find in Manhattan built manufacturing facilities that transformed an economy hitherto based on the growing of "edible tubers" and the harvesting of "succulent bivalves," as the *New York Times* put it a century ago. Factories sprang up along the Astoria and Long Island City waterfronts and on the shores of Flushing and Jamaica Bays, as well as Newtown Creek—a three-mile body of water that by the 1920s was moving more cargo than all of New York's canals combined. Louis Comfort Tiffany established his glass works in Corona. Ford, Packard, and Benz built auto plants in Long Island City, while giant food-processing facilities sprang up in Jamaica.

Immigration provided the workforce for much of this expansion, of course, and occasionally the entrepreneurial drive. In central Queens, Jewish immigrants established shirtwaist factories, largely staffed by Jewish and Italian women. Huge industrial concerns, like the Laurel Hill Chemical Works on the banks of Newtown Creek, employed Italian and Polish men, who, after saving their money, brought their families to America and settled them nearby. With access to this growing workforce and inexpensive land, Queens became one of the nation's great industrial powers during the first part of the twentieth century, ranked 11th among cities when considered as an independent economy. By 1930, Queens counted more than 2,200 plants employing 100,000 workers and making 500 different products, led by food, textile, and apparel manufacturing.

Queens's growing residential neighborhoods also nourished a thriving retail economy, as shopping areas leavened by ethnic merchants grew up along places like Jamaica Avenue and Flushing's Main Street and attracted not just local shoppers but those from Nassau and Suffolk Counties. "I bought this store in 1948 because it was a vibrant street, serving quality residential areas," explains Herman Hochberg, who has been the proprietor of Queens Wines and Liquors on Ridgewood's diverse Myrtle Avenue ever since. "It was stable, and you felt it would be that way for a long time." Between small strips like this and the big department stores in Jamaica, Queens rang up some $1.6 billion a year in retail sales during the mid-1950s.

But as vibrant as Queens became during the first half of the twentieth century, New York's policymakers nearly killed off many of its neighborhoods in the century's second half. Beginning just after World War II, at the height of Gotham's economic power, successive city administrations, dedicated to big government and more social services, sharply increased spending and taxes, hastening the flight of industry and large portions of the middle class. To pay for a near doubling of the city's budget from 1946 to 1956 (a period when inflation

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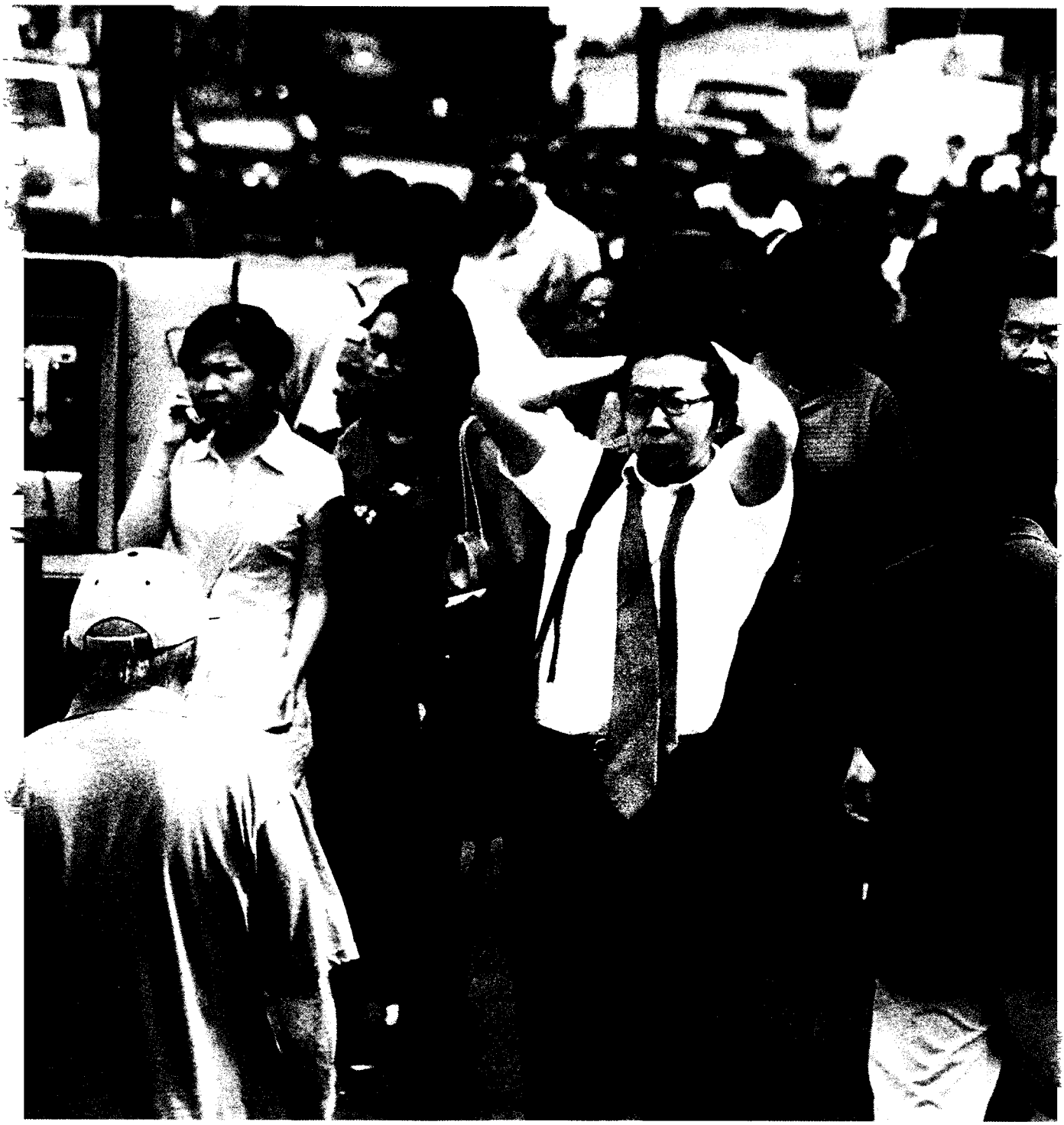

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increased by just 30 percent), the city steeply hiked taxes that disproportionately burdened Queens's economy, especially a gross-receipts tax on industry, which—because it taxed sales and not profits—crippled high-volume, low-margin industries like apparel manufacturing, encouraging them to move elsewhere. The city boosted its sales tax and extended it to products like clothing, not taxed in jurisdictions outside the city. Business dignitaries like Walter Hoving, then head of Bonwit Teller and later of Tiffany's, warned—presciently—that the relentless sales-tax increases would decimate retail jobs, especially in Queens. But the pace of city spending, and the tax hikes to pay for it, only quickened in the late 1950s and 1960s under the Wagner and Lindsay administrations.

The results were as dramatic as they were predictable. New York City hit its industrial-jobs peak in 1960 and began a steady decline in manufacturing jobs after that. Queens bore an enormous share of this decline: starting in 1960, its industrial-jobs base shrank by half in less than 25 years—even while manufacturing jobs continued growing in other big cities like Chicago and Los Angeles for 15 to 30 years. Without such a hostile business environment, in other words, New York might have enjoyed hundreds of thousands more industrial jobs for far longer than it did. Similarly, by the mid-1960s, merchants on the fringes of Queens and Brooklyn began going out of business in droves, reported the *New York Times*. The paper's editorial board called for the abolition of the sales tax, claiming it had made New York "an economic island." But the tax stayed, and jobs fled. One measure of the effect: even today, Queens has only about 75 percent of the retail jobs that counties with similar levels of disposable income enjoy.

But New York's political class remained untroubled by the concerns of outer-borough voters and business owners. The Lindsay administration treated Queens with almost outright hostility, provoking outrage by building low-income housing in predominantly Jewish Forest Hills and by its plans to seize and tear down 60 homes in the Italian-American neighborhood of Corona

Nearly half of Queens's residents are foreign-born.

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for a high school athletic field—which after three bitter years got whittled down to only four destroyed homes. Then came the snowstorm of February 1969, when Queens's streets lay unplowed for four days, stranding people without food and water and causing 26 deaths in the borough. In those years, too, crime soared: murders in Queens more than doubled, from 59 in 1966, the year Lindsay took office, to 138 in 1973, his last year in city hall. One resident summed up the borough's frustration to a *Times* reporter: "A guy in Queens making $10,000 can't figure out where it's all going. . . . He looks around and sees New York's biggest expense is welfare. He's paying off the mortgage and the neighborhood's getting unsafe, the schools are getting lousier . . . no street cleaning, no snow removal, no cops around, no visits from the Mayor."

In response, many in Queens voted with their feet. Nearly 76,000 white, mostly middle-class citizens fled during the 1960s, and many of the older ethnic enclaves began to break up. The migration became more widespread in the 1970s, when Queens registered its only net population decline since the federal census began in 1790—a drop of 95,000, or nearly 5 percent. The borough's unemployment rate rocketed to nearly 11 percent. Once-thriving retail districts tumbled. "By the mid-1970s, 30 percent of our stores weren't rented," says Herman Hochberg of an 11-block stretch of Myrtle Avenue. "You'd walk down the street and look at broken store windows, jagged gates, dirty sidewalks."

But no place in Queens ever descended into the disarray that overwhelmed the South Bronx or central Brooklyn, because even as the borough's middle class and business community were decamping, a new generation of New Yorkers starting settling in Queens, seeking the same middle-class life that the borough had always offered. Largely foreigners, these newcomers flooded in after the U.S. relaxed its immigration quotas in 1965. Queens became home to Koreans, Taiwanese, Caribbean blacks, Pakistanis, Indians, and Eastern Europeans, among others, whose new ethnic enclaves changed the face of the borough. While in 1920, Queens had boasted the highest number of native-born citizens in the city, by the early 1980s it had the highest percentage of foreign-born citizens. One neighborhood, Elmhurst, became the city's most diverse: the 1980 census counted immigrants from 110 countries there.

But of course, many urban neighborhoods have foundered rather than prospered on immigration. What makes Queens successful is that its new immigrants have revivified its middle-class neighborhoods and civic institutions with the strong middle-class values and aspirations they brought with them. Writing more than 40 years ago in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs observed that cities work best when many small, unofficial self-governing bodies strive to make their own little neighborhoods more livable and prosperous. She might have been describing Queens, which at the time she was writing boasted more than 200 civic associations, some of them vestiges of the borough's former town governments, others remnants of ethnic organizations that previous generations of Queens residents had brought with them or established. Over time, Queens's new arrivals learned to use this universe of community and civic associations, churches, small chambers of commerce, business districts, parent-teacher associations, and youth organizations and leagues as effectively as their predecessors.

Those organizations helped steady, and sometimes revive, swaths of Queens, and they now preside over its continuing evolution. Take downtown Jamaica, once again a major shopping district. The area began to suffer in the early 1960s from rising crime, suburban competition, and the city's sales-tax hikes. White-collar jobs evaporated: a flock of small law firms migrated to Long Island, for instance, taking their workers with them. By the late 1960s, the once-bustling shopping area was described as "shabby" and "totally deteriorating" in press reports.

But then the Jamaica chamber of commerce sparked a series of revival projects, including New York's first special-assessment district, the forerunner of today's highly effective business improvement districts (BIDs), in which local

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businesses chip in to pay for better street furniture or increased security or sanitation. Under prodding from the chamber, merchants along 165th Street kicked in thousands for a new pedestrian mall, and they nudged city government to tear down the El that darkened the street. Slowly, change came, as minority and immigrant shop owners opened for business beside the established retailers who had decided to stay and fight to revive the strip.

Today, downtown Jamaica is thriving. Unlike virtually anything else in a major city, it attracts shoppers from hundreds of miles away to its stores selling everything from hip-hop- and reggae-inspired clothing to ethnic beauty products and folk art. Nearly every weekend, up to 70 busloads of shopping pilgrims start out late on Friday night or early Saturday morning from mostly black neighborhoods in places like Rochester, Buffalo, and Detroit, and throng into the stores just as they open their doors on Saturday morning. Mostly women on trips sponsored by their local church or neighborhood community group, they often accumulate enough merchandise to fill several giant trash bags, which they load into the luggage holds of their buses before heading home.

"Queens's new immigrants have revivified its middle-class neighborhoods and civic institutions."

One place these shoppers crowd into is Cookies, a children's clothing store that is among the area's most popular retailers. "Kmart and Wal-Mart don't buy for the urban shopper. We do, and that's why they come," says Cookies owner Marvin Falach, who opened the store 30 years ago, at the depth of the area's decline, and prospered as the neighborhood revived. "It started happening when new people moved in, a new middle class, somewhere around 1980," says Falach, who gradually accumulated buildings in the area and expanded Cookies from a tiny store to its present 35,000-square-foot configuration.

Key to the revival has been a sharp crime drop. By the mid-1970s, the precinct encompassing Jamaica averaged more than 10,000 crimes annually, enough to drive away shoppers and doom the area's department stores. But after leveling off in the 1980s, crime fell sharply in the mid-1990s, thanks to the Giuliani era's activist policing. Last year, the precinct recorded just over 2,000 crimes—down 80 percent from the worst years of the 1970s. Boroughwide, crime has also declined about 70 percent in the last 10 years, and today Queens's violent-crime rate is 25 percent lower than the city's as a whole.

Also key to Jamaica's revival was the renewal of the surrounding residential areas of Southeast Queens, which filled up with a new generation of Caribbean blacks and with black middle-class families fleeing urban decay in other parts of New York. Attracting them were the small, affordable single-family homes and tidy streets of neighborhoods like Cambria Heights, developed as a blue-collar enclave in the 1920s. All told, Queens gained more than 90,000 black residents in the 1960s, and the median family income for blacks in the borough rose 72 percent, to $9,850, in 1970—the highest personal income of blacks anywhere in the city, and higher than the citywide median for all residents. Queens blacks also boasted the lowest poverty level among blacks in the city, just 11 percent.

The newcomers showed the same tenacious civic-mindedness that their predecessors had displayed. Take, for example, the transformation of an abandoned 54-acre naval-hospital complex in the St. Albans section. Neighbors rallied to form the Southern Queens Parks Association—a confederation of civic associations, church organizations, and fraternal groups like the United Black Men of Queens—which persuaded the city to let it develop and operate the decaying complex as a park. After raising private funds, the association created Roy Wilkins Park, complete with basketball and tennis courts, football and cricket fields,

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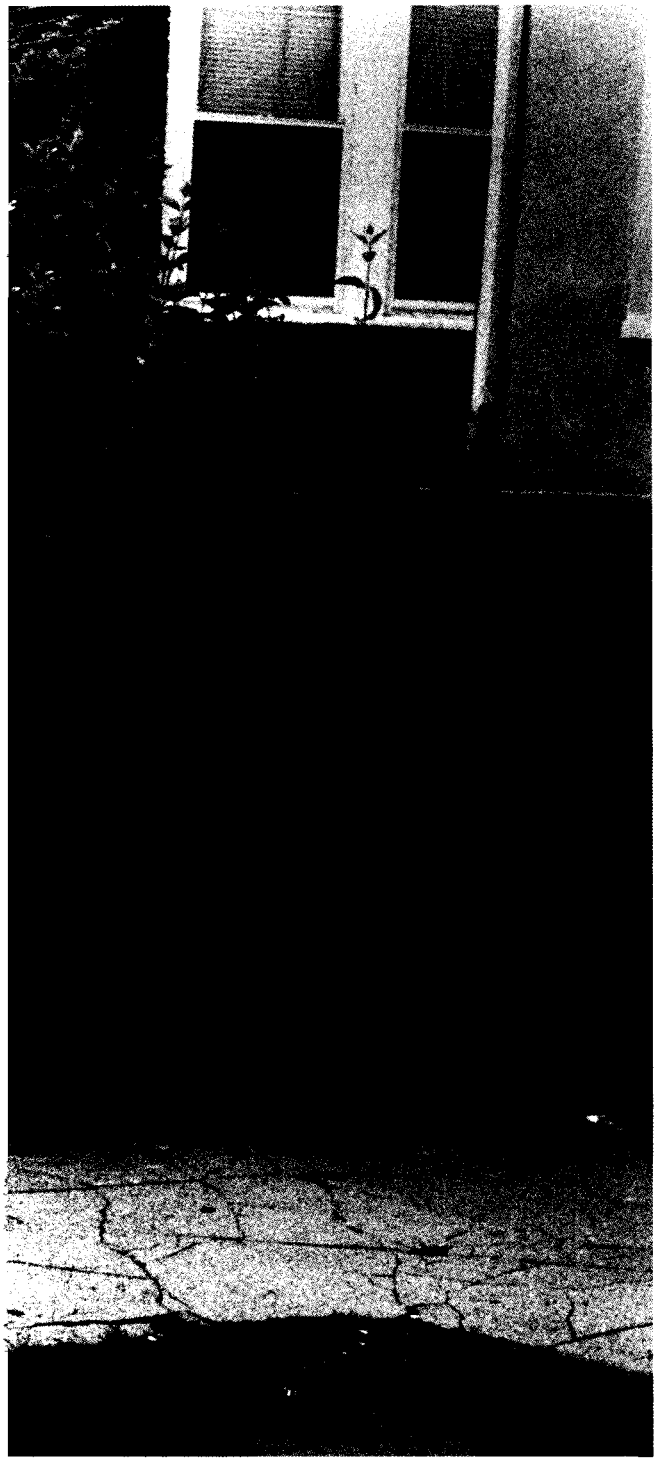

even a theater—all of which it still operates today as a central part of Southeast Queens's civic life.

Because of efforts like these, Southeast Queens today boasts one of the city's most vibrant commercial districts and flourishing residential neighborhoods, housing much of New York's black middle class. Today, more than half of all blacks in Queens own their own homes. By the standards of the "creative class" technology economy, these neighborhoods are eminently boring, with street after street of families living their dreams in homes that typically sell for a modest $250,000 or so. The population of civil servants, blue-collar workers, and entrepreneurial black immigrant business owners earns family incomes well above the citywide average—in some neighborhoods averaging more than $70,000 a year. What accounts for the success? "Most of the families here are dual-income families," explains Jack Thompson, head of the Cambria Heights Civic Association. "This is a community of people who work."

What happened in Southeast Queens has repeated itself all over the borough. In Flushing, Asians sparked the renaissance. After the World's Fair there in the early 1960s, many employees of the South Korean trade exhibition decided to stay and make the area home. By the early 1980s, some 20,000 Koreans, along with thousands of Taiwanese, lived in Flushing, and a surge of immigration from mainland China late in the decade added thousands of new residents. Today, some 80,000 Asians live in Flushing, and the neighborhood is a hub of Queens's Asian business community, which totals about 5,500 enterprises.

Crucial to Flushing's success are the efforts of local businessmen to keep it a clean, orderly, mainstream commercial area, rather than a chaotic ethnic street bazaar like the Chinatowns of Manhattan and other American cities. A leader in this campaign is Peter Koo, a former city-hospital pharmacist who opened his first

Cambria Heights has become home to much of Gotham's black middle class. Half of Queens's blacks are homeowners.

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Shoppers travel hundreds of miles in buses to visit stores in Jamaica like Cookies, with its unique ethnic merchandise.

Flushing drugstore in 1991 and now operates two of them. Watching Main Street grow ever more crowded and bustling during the 1990s boom, Koo and some of his merchant friends worried that city services couldn't keep up; the street was becoming dirtier and less appealing. Concluding that businesses needed to band together to help maintain the area, he knew that it would be tough to persuade immigrant businessmen to pay the needed assessments to set up a business improvement district. So he and six colleagues did the next best thing: to demonstrate what a BID might do, they used their own money to hire the Doe Fund, which employs homeless people to sweep streets, to make Main Street shine. Soon, Koo's BID proposal became so popular that adjoining areas of Flushing clamored to be included, too, and last year the proposal became a reality. "People saw the streets get cleaner, and they were convinced," says Koo.

Another key to Flushing's success has been the Korean Christian churches, which are as vital to the community as Catholic churches and Jewish synagogues were for previous Queens generations. Judging by the numbers, the Korean saying that when three or more Koreans get together, the first thing they do is start a church is only a slight exaggeration. The 300 or so Korean Christian churches in New York in the mid-1980s doubled to nearly 600 ten years later. Kyeyoung Park, author of *The Korean American Dream: Immigrants and Small Business in New York City*, says that what distinguishes these churches is how fervently they work to transmit American values to the community. In addition, they often sponsor *gaes*, or lending pools, in which successful immigrants contribute to a general fund that others can tap for loans to open businesses. Korean churches also serve as clearinghouses for information about business opportunities. Koreans have brought new life to old Queens houses of worship, like the First Presbyterian Church, founded by early Scottish settlers, just as Taiwanese immigrants have revived

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the Reformed Church of Newtown, established by Dutch Protestants in 1731.

Though many cities segregate residential from commercial neighborhoods, in Flushing these two intermingle. The area's 260,000 residents live side by side with businesses that employ 50,000 people, earning about $2 billion a year in wages. The competition between residential and commercial users for the same real estate ensures the highest value use for those resources. The historic former RKO Theater on Northern Boulevard, for instance, which once staged such vaudeville acts as the Marx Brothers, is now morphing into a residential and retail building that will retain the old theater's flamboyant lobby, while the Prince Center, an 80,000-square-foot office building off Main Street that opened less than two years ago, sits kitty-corner to garden apartment buildings and a few doors down from the Sheraton La Guardia Hotel, with its Asian-themed lobby.

Thanks to this ceaseless activity, Flushing barely noticed the tough times that slowed the New York economy in the last three years. "We opened Prince Center in the middle of a recession and still couldn't accommodate everyone who wanted space," says Wellington Chen, an architect and urban planner who emigrated to the United States in 1971 and has worked in Flushing for 20 years. "There has been no recession here."

"Home Depot's first Queens store, opened in 1994, became the highest-grossing in the chain."

Though Queens's manufacturing economy began to collapse in the early 1960s, the borough managed to retain, and then even expand, a blue-collar base of local manufacturing, wholesaling, and construction jobs that gives it a diversity that the city's larger economy lacks. Queens is still home to some 35,000 manufacturing jobs, many of them in food processing, and it boasts about 3,800 construction companies employing nearly 42,000 people, who earn on average a muscular $55,000 a year. Queens's airports provide nearly 12,000 trucking, warehousing, and transportation jobs, along with 40,000 air-transport jobs.

From early on, Queens's industrial neighborhoods grew up in close proximity to its residential enclaves, and today the borough's access to skilled blue-collar workers, often in short supply elsewhere, remains a major industrial strength, at a time when suburban companies send buses into Queens and Brooklyn to pick up competent workers. Flushing's Crystal Window and Door, for example, a rapidly growing national manufacturer and distributor of construction materials, has turned down incentives from New Jersey and other states that would have saved the company hundreds of thousands of dollars, in order to remain close to its skilled, hard-to-replace Chinese and Hispanic workforce. Doing that keeps turnover low, says company founder Thomas Chen, an immigrant from China. "The workforce is the reason we are here," says Robert Nyman, executive consultant at Crystal.

The College Point Industrial Park that houses Crystal is also the site of another sort of revival in Queens—its tradition of large-scale retailing. The borough's economy suffered when its big department stores went under or fled to the suburbs, and the city's zoning restrictions prevented new-style big-box retailers from opening. Developers in College Point have helped reverse the outflow of shopping dollars from Queens to Nassau, Suffolk, and New Jersey. The shopping mall they created in some of College Point's former industrial space now houses such big-box retailers as Target and BJ's Wholesale Club, which opened in 1999. Both units are among these chains' highest-grossing stores.

That has become a familiar refrain among national retailers in Queens. Home Depot's first Queens store, opened in 1994 under a loophole in New York's restrictive retail zoning, became the highest-grossing in the chain. Its six stores in the borough average about twice the sales

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volume of a typical Home Depot nationwide. Even the borough's only suburban-style mall—Queens Center in Elmhurst Park—is one of the nation's best-performing shopping centers, averaging about $1,000 a square foot in sales, compared with a national average of $300. There's no secret to its success: nearly 800,000 mostly middle-class households live within five miles—which is why the mall recently doubled its size to 1 million square feet.

The sum of all these parts is an economy consistently more stable and vigorous than New York City's as a whole. Though hardly a center of the go-go economy, the borough consistently added jobs at a faster pace than Gotham as a whole throughout most of the 1990s, even faster than Manhattan for part of that period. And when the recession hit New York, Queens lost jobs at a slower pace. Today, Queens's unemployment rate is about two percentage points lower than the city's overall rate, and in line with the national unemployment rate. And despite headlines about Manhattan as a magnet for young, hip workers, Queens accounted for 40 percent of the city's population increase during the 1990s—adding 278,000 residents, a 14.2 percent gain. One source of new residents was its sister boroughs of Brooklyn, Manhattan, and the Bronx, which contributed a net of nearly 40,000 people to Queens from 1996 to 2000—just as they have done for the last 100 years.

Of course, Queens's importance does not lie merely in the success of its neighborhoods or in its self-contained economy. The borough plays a vitally important role in Gotham's overall economic and political life. It provides Manhattan with a significant chunk of its skilled, reliable workforce, and middle-class Queens voters have played a decisive role in New York's recent political fate.

The 345,000 Queens residents who work in Manhattan staff the companies that are the heart of Gotham's economy. They include Wall Streeters from the fashionable enclaves of Douglaston and Malba, bookkeepers, nurses, and computer technicians from the Caribbean-American neighborhoods in Southeast Queens, greengrocers from Flushing, mid-level managers, sales executives, and administrative workers from neighborhoods like Kew Gardens and College Point, and blue-collar workers from Corona who staff Manhattan's garment factories. The number of Queens residents working in Manhattan—a larger contingent than from any of the other three outer boroughs and nearly as large as that from all New York's suburbs combined—is growing, while the other three boroughs' share is declining, as the suburbs, particularly the Jersey suburbs, grab an ever-greater share of Manhattan's jobs.

In addition to providing a responsible and dedicated workforce for Manhattan's vital businesses, these residents make an enormous contribution to New York's fiscal health. They pay about $1.4 billion a year in state and city personal-income taxes, while property owners pay $2.1 billion in taxes, more than any borough except Manhattan. The borough's high concentration of middle-class families bears much of that burden: 217,000 or so Queens families earning between $40,000 and $100,000 a year pay about half of Queens's income taxes. Without them, New York—like so many other cities—would be much more a place of just the rich and the poor, and the burden on the rich to support city services would be even greater than it is now. As a result, ever more of them would leave the city or avoid its high taxes by establishing dual residences elsewhere—which is how cities decline.

With so much worth preserving, Queens residents play a vital, stabilizing role in the city's political life, especially during periods when city hall lurches to the left. In the sixties and seventies, Queens residents formed much of the political opposition to the Lindsay administration and its agenda of high taxes and expensive social programs. The political moderation of the later Lindsay years—when the mayor abandoned many of his plans to remake New York into a paragon of left-wing social policies—was in large part a response to the anger he generated in Queens during his first term.

Similarly, in the early 1990s, as crime soared and New York's economy sagged, Queens provided the political margin that elected Rudy Giuliani and set in motion the revival of the city.

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Giuliani won Queens by 107,000 votes, in an election in which his citywide margin of victory was only 44,000 votes. Very much an outer-borough ethnic himself, Giuliani captivated Queens voters with his agenda of tough-on-crime policing, budget and tax restraint, and welfare reform. Without Queens voters, Giuliani's opponent, David Dinkins, would have remained mayor, and the city's stunning rebirth in the 1990s would never have occurred. Queens voters were also key to Michael Bloomberg's victory in 2001, after he pledged no tax increases. Bloomberg's current efforts to rebate at least some of the property-tax increase he pushed through in 2002, in violation of his campaign promise, are a direct result of the anger his policies have understandably sparked in Queens's middle-class neighborhoods.

"Queens provided the political margin that elected Rudy Giuliani and set in motion the revival of the city."

Just as before, city hall's recent leftward lurch seriously threatens Queens's future. In echoes of the complaints of the late 1960s, Queens voters are grumbling that they are being held up to support Gotham's extravagant municipal spending. They note that officials justified 2002's $1.8 billion property-tax hike by saying that the city's homeowners pay lower property taxes than those in the suburbs—a point that ignores the fact that Gotham homeowners also pay a personal-income tax that suburban homeowners don't pay. For some in Queens, the tax increases evoked echoes of the Lindsay years, when the administration of a liberal Republican mayor who hobnobbed with the Manhattan elite seemed unsympathetic to middle-class homeowners.

What particularly rankled the citizens of Queens was Mayor Bloomberg's insouciant refrain during the budget debates that New York will always be a high-cost city, with high taxes that are both inevitable and easily affordable. "The debate was about homeowners versus Manhattan's elite," says Corey Bearak, vice president of the Queens Civic Congress, a coalition of nearly 100 community groups—and, he complains, the Manhattan elitists who man the Bloomberg administration "just don't like homeowners."

Queens businessmen also grumble that the city's mad dash for revenues to close its budget gap—including papering the borough's commercial districts with parking tickets—fell heavily on them and showed disdain for their concerns. Though the stepped-up traffic enforcement seems like a small problem, Queens merchants continually compete for customers with suburban stores, and insufficient parking is a big problem. "Our customers were harassed," says Fred Gerson, third-generation owner of the Fair Interiors home-furnishings store on Myrtle Avenue in Ridgewood, which attracts about one-third of its customers from outside the city. "It's the nuisance factor."

Queens residents are also warily eyeing the Bloomberg administration's attempts to reform the city's school system. The borough boasts some of the city's best schools—a magnet for the middle class—and residents worry that Bloomberg's curriculum changes and other reforms might do more harm than good. In addition, says the Civic Congress's Bearak, "There's always a fear that Queens schools will be robbed of resources, or that teachers or valuable administrators will be moved to elsewhere in the city."

In neighborhoods as varied as Astoria, Douglaston, Hollis Hills, and Utopia, children score well above the city average on math and reading tests. At two schools in Douglaston, 100 percent of fourth-graders perform at or above grade level in math. Several of the borough's high schools also far outperform most of their peers; not long

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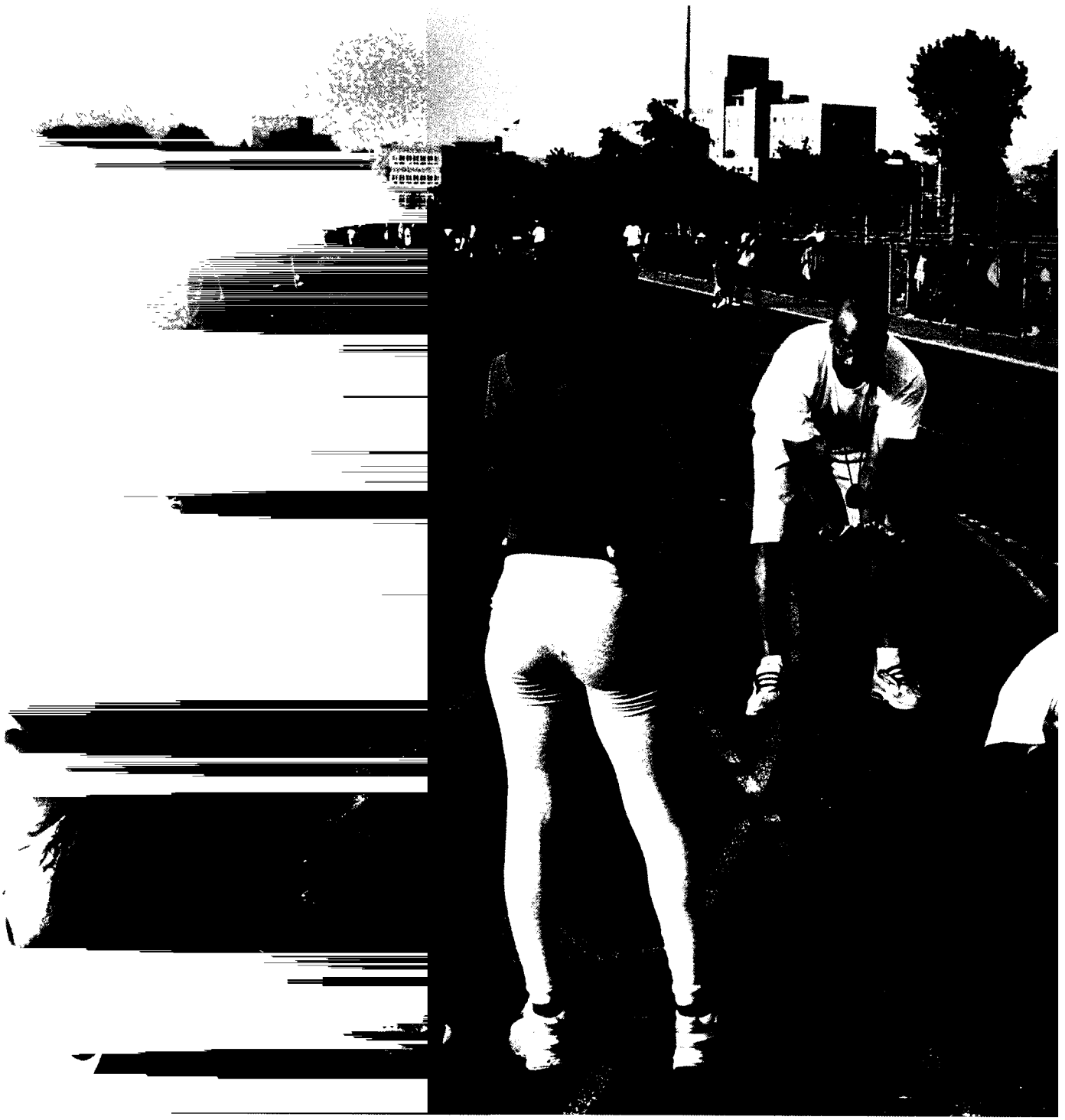

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ago, *Newsweek* magazine ranked Bayside's Benjamin N. Cardozo High School one of the top 100 high schools in the nation, with 98 percent of its graduates going on to college.

Residents say that there is little mystery why their schools succeed within an otherwise dysfunctional system: they benefit from intense parental and community involvement. "Our principals have a big advantage because they can always turn to parents for help," says Tina Chan, head of the Kew Forest Neighborhood Civic Association. "If a school classroom lacks something in this neighborhood, the parents' association will go out and raise money and make sure it gets in the classroom." Indeed, PTAs are an art form in civic-minded Queens. Typical is P.S. 188 in Hollis Hills, where the local parents' association has some 40 committees that help in fund-raising and advising school administrators.

Despite its many virtues, Queens today is often remembered primarily as the home of *All in the Family*'s Archie Bunker, the loudmouthed, blue-collar bigot invented by ultra-liberal Norman Lear. Bunker debuted during the Lindsay years, when the liberals looked with horror at how ordinary New Yorkers, especially from Queens's ethnic neighborhoods, furiously resisted many of the progressive nostrums that Lindsay and his circle tried to force on them. Though Bunker evolved into a sort of genial, cartoonish figure, the show was part of a contemptuous assault against the ideals and values of the country's blue-collar, family-oriented, ethnic middle class by the liberal elites of the time, who viewed resistance to their agenda as raw bigotry. But the citizens of Queens, for the most part, were not bigots, as Lear depicted them; and they were much wiser than John Lindsay, as the decline and revival of Queens—and of New York as a whole—makes clear. Let's hope that the Manhattan elites don't try to ride roughshod over the values and interests of the borough again. It won't be just Queens that suffers. ■

Queens civic groups used private funds to transform an abandoned hospital into a complex of athletic fields and a community center.

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Yes, the Education President

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JASON REED/CORBIS

Though attacked and belittled, George W. Bush's education reforms represent real progress.

Sol Stern

In the fall of 1995, Dr. Reid Lyon, who directs research in the neuroscience of reading and learning disorders in children at the National Institutes of Health, got an unexpected call from first-year Texas governor George W. Bush. "Look," Bush said, getting right to the point. "I have lots of kids who are not reading well. What's the science on this that can guide us?" After that chat, Bush flew Lyon down to Texas several times to help redesign the state's early-childhood reading programs so that they incorporated the latest NIH findings. "We've had a great relationship ever since," Bush recently noted.

Lyon now serves as President Bush's informal advisor on reading pedagogy, and he helped craft parts of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act, the ambitious federal education bill that Bush signed into law in January 2002. Thanks largely to

President Bush's No Child Left Behind act aims to close the reading gap that underlies the black-white education gap.

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Led by Ted Kennedy, Democrats who now condemn NCLB were fervent supporters when the act was passed, thanks in part to Bush administration concessions.

his input, Washington for the first time is using its spending power to prod school districts across the nation to rely on scientific standards in selecting reading programs. "There's no need to throw good money into programs that don't work," Bush explains. "We've tried that before."

For NCLB's reading initiative alone, Bush richly deserves the title "education president." But in addition, NCLB, though not perfect, is a powerful instrument of reform in other ways. What's more, a new Bush-promoted school voucher program for Washington, D.C., may point the way toward further education reform in a second Bush term.

Not that the president's opponents in the education establishment and the Democratic Party are likely to give him any credit for these accomplishments. With all of today's harsh criticism of NCLB, it's easy to forget that it passed Congress by overwhelming bipartisan majorities (87 to 10 in the Senate; 381 to 41 in the House) and that Ted Kennedy stood beaming with the president at the bill-signing ceremony (above). That era of good feelings lasted only a few months—about as long as it took for the public education industry to realize just how serious Bush was about no longer rewarding failure.

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The educrats have ample reason to be upset. Before NCLB, the public schools' failure to educate poor minority kids resulted in ever-increasing streams of federal money to local districts—more than $200 billion over the last four decades, disbursed with no questions asked. Now along comes Bush, requiring state and local districts to prove that the programs that federal dollars pay for have a solid scientific basis and actually work. Once public educators started trashing NCLB, Democrats suddenly decided that they hated it, too. Senator Kennedy now claims that the president "duped" him and that the act's funding amounted to a "tin cup budget," despite a big hike in federal education spending under Bush.

"A key assumption behind the school choice provision: competition would make the public schools better."

In announcing his candidacy, Bush promised that education reform would be his Number One domestic policy priority. His plan, soon named No Child Left Behind, rested on three basic reforms, which states wanting federal education money would have to accept. First came a Lyon-influenced reading initiative. "The findings of years of scientific research on reading are now available, and application of this research to the classroom is now possible for all schools in America," Bush noted.

Second would be annual testing in basic reading and math skills for all kids in grades three through eight, with the results—broken down by race, sex, English-language proficiency, and socioeconomic status—made public. States would devise their own tests, subject to federal oversight. Mandatory testing had been key to Bush's education reform success in Texas, where it worked to hold schools accountable.

Third was the creation of an escape hatch for disadvantaged kids stuck in awful schools. If such a student attended a school that failed to make "adequate yearly progress in improving academic outcomes" for three years running, he would be able to use federal funds "to transfer to a higher-performing public or private school"—in other words, he'd get a voucher—or he could "receive supplemental educational services" from an outside provider. The failing school would get some extra financial and technical help the first year, but if it continued to fail, it might have to close, as more and more students transferred out.

A key assumption behind the school choice provision was the idea that competition would make the public schools better. If lousy schools faced the prospect of losing students to other public or private schools, teachers and administrators would try harder to improve things. A profound moral imperative also drove Bush's reform agenda: it was unacceptable for society to relegate poor black and Hispanic children to perennially failing public schools.

The president began putting the first part of his education reform package into place literally hours after he took the oath of office. The morning after the inauguration, he and Mrs. Bush listened carefully as Reid Lyon and other top education researchers presented their findings at a White House forum on reading pedagogy. The president made it clear that he wanted federal reading policy to go "wherever the evidence leads."

From his gubernatorial days, Bush already had a good idea that the evidence was leading straight to phonics. Following Lyon's advice, he had pushed local districts in Texas to adopt phonics-based curricula and saw reading scores in the state shoot up, particularly for minority kids. The number of third-graders—52,000—who failed the reading test at the start of the Bush governorship declined to 36,000 when he left for the White House and has since dropped to 28,000, now that all his reforms are up and running. Since then, the evidence has become irrefutable. After reviewing dozens of studies—some using magnetic

J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

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resonance imaging to measure differences in brain function between strong and weak readers and among children taught to read by various methods—the National Reading Panel, commissioned by Congress, concluded in 2000 that effective reading programs, especially for kids living in poverty, required phonics-based instruction.

Within a week of taking office, the Bush administration devised a strategy for getting a $6 billion "Reading First" phonics initiative past the relevant House and Senate education committees. The administration was offering school systems a deal that went like this: "The federal government will give you lots more money than ever before for early reading programs. Nothing obligates you to take the money. But if you do take it, the programs you choose must teach children using phonics." Hardly a single legislator raised doubts about tying federal reading dollars to instructional approaches backed by a consensus of the nation's scientific experts.

Extending his commitment to science-backed pedagogy even further, Bush asked Lyon to help find top scientists for key Department of Education posts formerly reserved for teachers' union and public school officials. Lyon recruited Grover Whitehurst, formerly chair of the psychology department and a professor of pediatrics at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, to head the department's Institute of Education Sciences, which has become the administration's bully pulpit for encouraging science-backed teaching methods in all subject areas.

You'd think that educators would welcome the scientific turn in federal reading policy. After all, the racial gap in school performance that liberals as well as conservatives decry as the greatest obstacle to equal opportunity in America first shows up as a wide gap in reading. While 40 percent of all American kids don't attain the "basic" reading level by fourth grade, the rate of reading failure for inner-city black and Hispanic children is a catastrophic 70 percent. If we now have hard evidence on what methods will best bring these struggling kids up to speed, why wouldn't educators support the government's efforts to promote those methods?

The short answer is ideology and money. The nation's leading teachers' colleges and professional teachers' organizations, such as the National Council of Teachers of English, hate phonics. Columbia University's Teachers College, to take one prominent example, doesn't have a single class in phonics instruction. In these precincts, "whole language" reading instruction, in which children ostensibly learn to read "naturally" by absorbing word clues from whole texts, is the politically correct pedagogy, even though its claims to success have no scientific backing. The educational establishment views President Bush, Reid Lyon, and all their works as part of a vast right-wing conspiracy to regiment America's children.

There's also tons of money at stake. If the idea of science-backed reading instruction takes hold in the nation's school districts, millions of dollars in fees currently paid to the ed schools for whole-language teacher training and curriculum development will vanish.

Small wonder that Teachers College president Arthur Levine recently penned a furious op-ed denouncing NCLB's Reading First provision, after the Bush administration showed that it meant business and refused $39 million in funding for New York City's "balanced literacy" reading program (a euphemism for whole language) earlier this year. (The city subsequently switched over to a phonics program in 49 schools with mostly minority student populations in order to get the money.) Levine was flabbergasted that the federal Department of Education was actually enforcing the nation's new education law. "Reading First removed control from the mayor and placed crucial decisions about education in the hands of President Bush," Levine complained. Apparently Levine forgot that one major purpose of presidential elections is to give the winner the right to make "crucial decisions" about spending federal tax dollars, and that the city could keep all the control it wanted simply by not accepting the federal money.

So far, complaints from professional educators about Reading First don't seem to be getting any traction with parents or the public, however. All 50 states have submitted proposals to the Department of Education requesting Reading

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First grants and vowing that they will use the funds only for science-backed phonics instruction, and they have already received more than $2 billion. Though it's too early to say that the nation's schools are "hooked on phonics," the schools are more aware than ever that scientific evidence, not ideology, should guide decisions about reading instruction.

But NCLB's other components—testing and accountability—have proven far more vulnerable to the act's critics, thanks to defects in the drafting of the law that resulted from concessions to congressional Democrats.

"The National Reading Panel concluded in 2000 that effective reading programs required phonics-based instruction."

The contested 2000 election and an evenly divided Senate left President Bush with a weak hand as he tried to get Congress to adopt his education reform package. To get any education bill at all, he would need some Democratic votes, and for political reasons he and his advisors concluded that they needed not just a few Dems but a big, bipartisan majority behind this signature piece of domestic legislation.

During negotiations, the Bush team concluded that, while science-backed reading and state testing could win big majorities, the private school choice remedy for kids trapped in failing schools—vouchers—was a sure loser. "Democratic opposition was just too strong," one insider recalls. "No amount of arm-twisting or cajoling could change that political reality."

The result was a watered-down choice provision. Disadvantaged kids in schools that the state tests showed had failed to make "adequate yearly progress" two years in a row would be able to transfer, but only into non-failing *public* schools within the same district, or in other districts, if school officials there agreed to accept the students. As in Bush's original plan, the lousy school could face closure if it didn't improve.

A second concession changed the definition of a failing school, since liberal Democrats wanted to include not just schools with consistently atrocious test results for all students, but also those in which a small racial or ethnic subgroup was doing poorly, even if most of their classmates were doing fine. "Some of the Democrats on the other side didn't want to say that it's okay to have one group falling behind in a school," recalls the administration's point man in the negotiations, Sandy Kress, a former chairman of the Texas Democratic Party. "In effect, they were telling us that if you really want to say, 'No Child Left Behind,' then let's really leave *no* child behind."

Though these changes won Bush his huge majority, they proved costly. Putting lots more schools on the failing list, while letting their students transfer only into non-failing public schools, created massive confusion. After all, in most inner-city districts, *all* of the public schools were failing; parents had no alternatives whatever. In New York City, for example, more than 300,000 families received notices that their kids were in schools not "making adequate yearly progress" and that they now could apply to send their children to "successful schools." But since the few "successful" public schools could accommodate only a tiny handful of those desperate kids, parents saw NCLB as a cruel joke, while the press branded it a fiasco. The chaos has prompted 14 states to seek exemptions from the law. Despite these setbacks, Bush education officials see a silver lining in public school choice: some urban school districts are opening new charter schools to accommodate students eligible to transfer.

Meanwhile, progressive education's militant anti-testing wing had found a brand-new cause. Best-selling writers like Jonathan Kozol and Alfie Kohn have always maintained that "testing kills"—apparently meaning this metaphorically. But now, at least one of their progressive-ed allies

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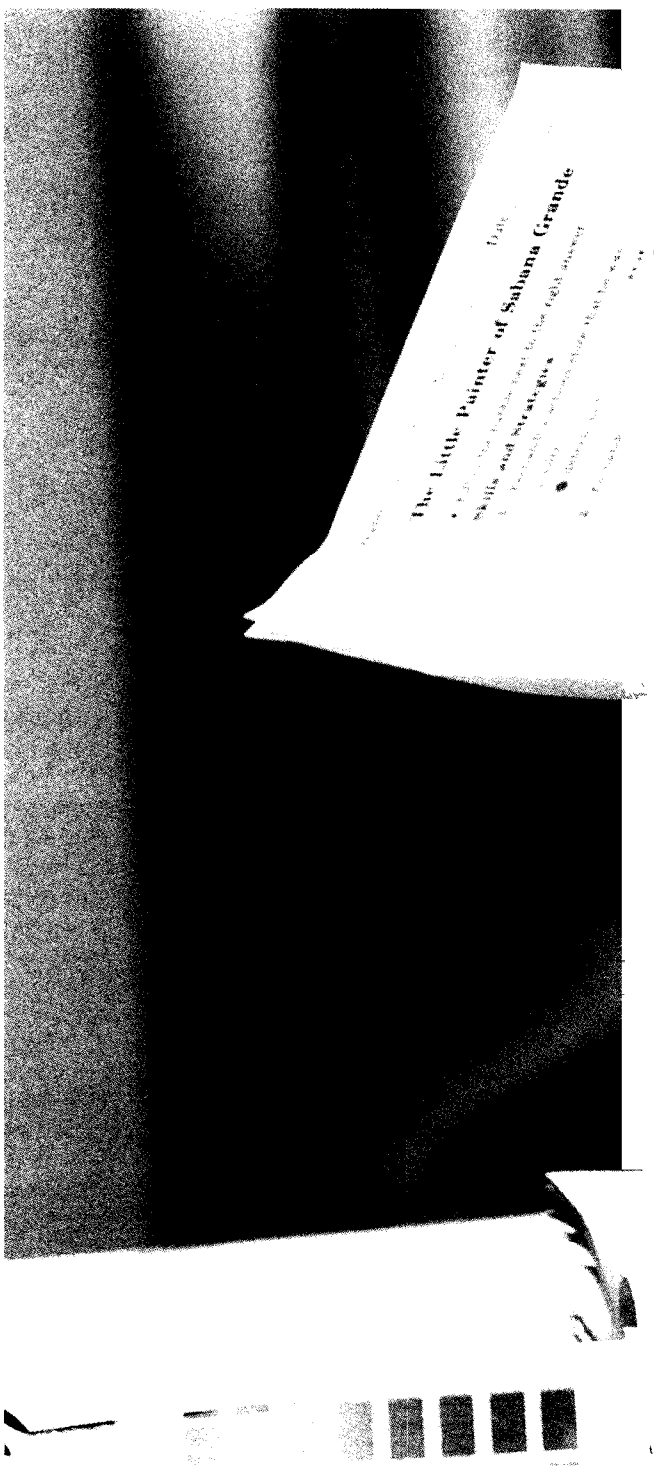
believes that NCLB testing requirements *literally* will kill kids.

Margaret A. McKenna, a big Kozol fan and president of Massachusetts's biggest teacher-training institution, Lesley University in Cambridge, writes that NCLB's "overwhelming focus on student achievement on annual standardized tests" will lead inexorably to more school violence like the 1999 Columbine High School massacre. After all, she argues, Columbine was a "high-achieving school," where students felt alienated by the pressure of high-stakes testing. Teachers, obsessed with test scores, didn't have time to get to know the kids and create a "real community." That's why they missed the telltale signs of student alienation and impending tragedy. Now, McKenna warns in a bizarre *Washington Post* op-ed, Columbine-like carnage is likely to explode in schools across the country as NCLB's accountability requirements "force communities to focus more on raising test scores than on raising kids."

In fact, the NCLB testing requirement is a crucial accountability tool, and not just because it can deprive poorly performing schools of federal education dollars if they don't shape up. In Texas, explains Kress, "the shame factor of seeing your school on a list of schools that did poorly was itself positive—it created an incentive for change."

The biggest falsehood that critics have promulgated against NCLB is that the bill represents an "unfunded mandate," in that it doesn't provide enough money to bring kids up to the standards it imposes. *New York Times* columnist Bob Herbert is typically dismissive. "It's hard to believe the president ever intended to adequately fund the No Child Left Behind Act," he writes, right after checking in with that objective source, Ted Kennedy. "Mr. Bush fights ferociously for the things he really cares about: enormous tax cuts for the wealthy, for example, or launching a war against Iraq. He has never showed a similar passion for the public schools." In fact, the Bush administration will spend a whopping 49 percent more on public education this year than the Clinton administration did in its last year in office. In



GAVIN AVERILL/AP WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

Progressive educators oppose NCLB's rigorous testing requirements and even predict that they could produce more Columbine-like massacres.

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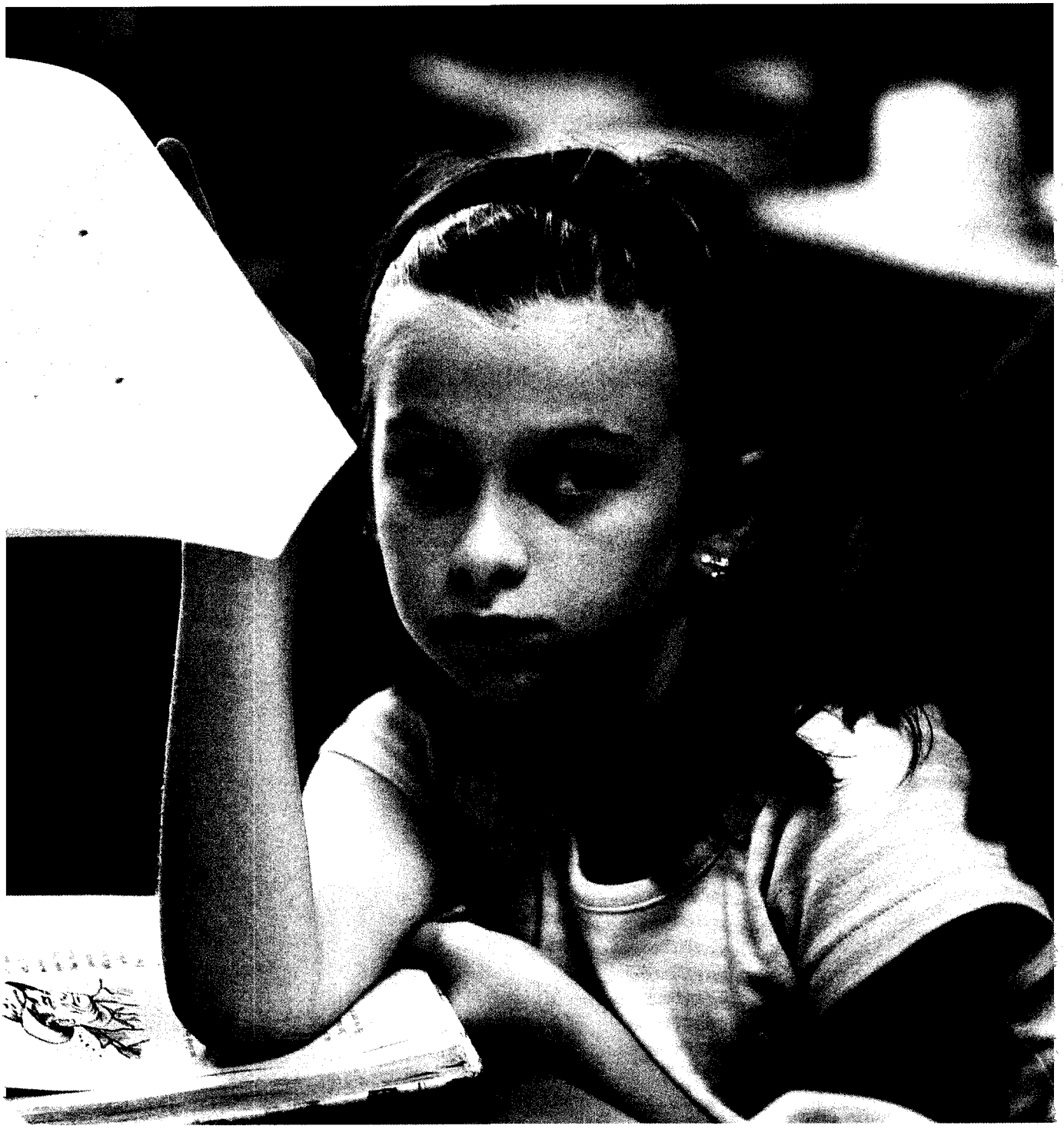

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just four years, the Bush team will quadruple what the Clinton administration spent on reading programs over eight years.

In any case, the funding issue is a red herring. The schools' woes have nothing to do with lack of funds. State, local, and federal expenditures on K-12 public education have tripled in inflation-adjusted dollars since 1960 and are nearing half a *trillion* dollars a year. The nation today spends from 30 to 80 percent more per pupil than other industrialized countries. Yet the U.S. usually comes in around 15th in international comparisons of student performance in math and reading.

When President Bush signed NCLB without private school vouchers, many education reformers feared that the bill was a big setback for the school choice cause. Yet a major advance for school choice did make it into the act: Supplemental Educational Services (SES). Largely unnoticed by most commentators at the time of NCLB's signing, the SES provision has turned out to be the new law's school choice sleeper.

In effect, SES gives disadvantaged students in schools that have failed for three straight years a voucher—worth up to $1,700 in some states—to buy tutoring services from licensed providers, both public and private, including religious institutions. The tutoring money comes out of the federal funds allocated to the failing school's district. Providers must win approval from state education departments and must sign contracts with the relevant school districts.

Some public school systems, feeling threatened by outside competition and wanting to hold on to the federal money, have balked at implementing SES services—delaying the signing of contracts or not informing parents of the tutoring options open to them. Last year, for example, the Buffalo, New York, public schools spent only $1 million in federal funds to tutor 800 kids, even though there were 9,000 eligible students and up to $14 million available for tutoring. In the Albany school district, where all the schools made the failing list, only one student is receiving SES tutoring so far, prompting Albany's mayor to call school officials on the carpet publicly. Still, more than 110,000 children across the nation received SES tutoring in 2002–03.

And that number will surely climb as reform organizations rush to get the word out. National school choice organizations like the Black Alliance for Educational Options and the Hispanic Council for Reform and Education Options are leading the way, having received federal grants to run SES information campaigns. At the same time, more and more providers are signing on, including, in New York State, the Boys and Girls Club, the Urban League, Sylvan Learning, Kaplan, Princeton Review, and even the Youth and Families Department of the City of Albany. And they are starting to get results. "I think we are beginning to see improvement with children who are way behind in reading skills," says Angel Staples, a third-grade teacher from the Buffalo public schools, about her moonlighting job as a tutor in an SES program. "It's partly because we use a very scripted phonics program and partly because we can give the children a lot of individual attention in our small classes."

Tom Carroll, a seasoned school choice activist in upstate New York, thinks that over time SES will whet parents' appetite for more reforms. "What parents are willing to accept from their public school districts will change when they see that there are private groups and churches that may be doing a better job of raising their kids' academic performance," Carroll says. Further, though the Bush administration makes no such predictions, Carroll argues that parents will eventually start asking why the local church school that tutors their kids after school can't teach them during the day, increasing support for publicly funded vouchers. Teachers College professor Henry Levin agrees, albeit ruefully. SES, he thinks, could be a Trojan horse, ultimately leading to vouchers. "By 2014," he predicted, "we're going to hear that public schools can't do the job, but that private schools can."

Though President Bush lost the fight to include vouchers in NCLB, he continued the battle on other fronts, with considerable success. Shortly after NCLB became law, for example, he sent solicitor general Ted Olson to the United States

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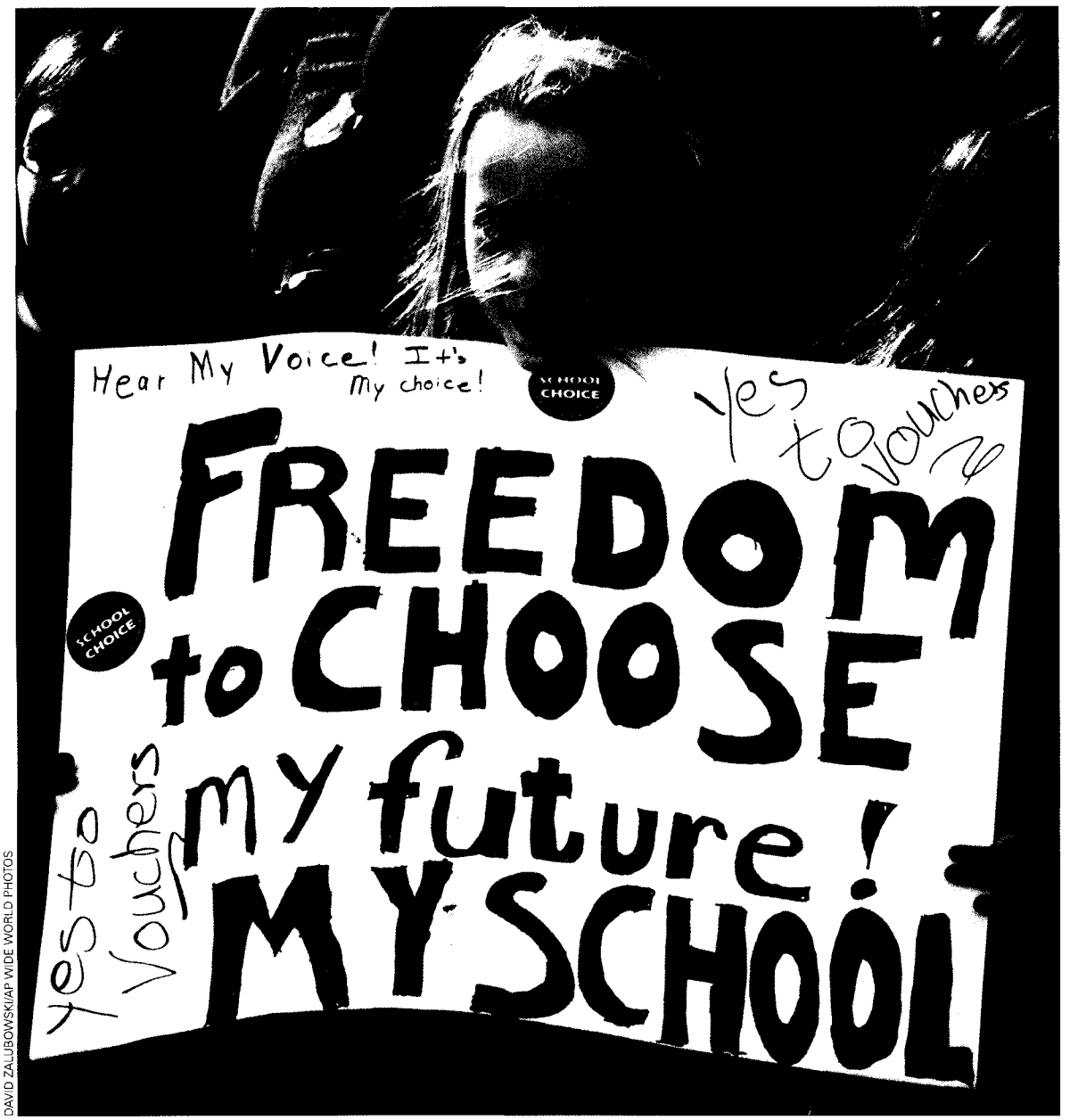

DAVID ZALUBOWSKI/AP WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

Democratic opposition watered down NCLB's school choice provisions, but a second Bush term could well expand them—especially if Washington, D.C.'s new voucher program succeeds.

Supreme Court to argue for private school choice in *Zelman* v. *Simmons-Harris*, the historic case that tested the constitutionality of Cleveland's taxpayer-funded voucher program, which includes parochial schools. No one can gauge how much the White House's intervention swayed the justices' 5-4 decision to uphold the voucher program, but no one in the courtroom could miss

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that the prestige of the presidency stood firmly in the pro-voucher camp.

A more momentous school choice victory was Congress's passage earlier this year of a five-year voucher test program for Washington, D.C. "Had it not been for the administration, the voucher bill wouldn't have passed," says Department of Education official Nina S. Rees. "It took a lot of backroom heavy lifting and hand-holding in Congress on our part." This fall, more than 1,000 poor minority kids in the nation's capital will get vouchers worth up to $7,500 to be used at any private or parochial school of their choice.

Of course, the fight for D.C. vouchers wasn't the president's alone. As in Milwaukee and Cleveland, vouchers came to D.C. thanks to an extraordinary grassroots effort in the city's black community. Crucial was the backing of D.C.'s popular black Democratic mayor Anthony Williams, who justified his support bluntly: "I got up one morning and decided there are a lot of kids getting a crappy education and we could do it better." But the voucher campaign would not have succeeded without President Bush's willingness to expend political capital. Under severe pressure from the two national teachers' unions five years earlier, President Clinton had vetoed a similar voucher bill.

Significantly, in passing the voucher bill, Congress began to grasp that the choice constraints they had placed upon NCLB undermined the act's effectiveness. As part of the final version of the D.C. voucher legislation, Congress issued a "finding" (as it does for many bills) describing the problem that the new law intends to deal with. In this case, the finding stated that the district needed a voucher program because NCLB's "public school choice" provisions are "inadequate due to capacity constraints."

So we've now come full circle since congressional Democrats forced President Bush to drop the private school choice option in NCLB. A majority of Congress now perceives that choice limited to the public schools is not a sufficient remedy for kids trapped in dysfunctional school systems like Washington's. Therefore, the top education reform goal of a second Bush administration should be to revisit NCLB's accountability and choice provisions when the act's reauthorization comes due in 2006. Since the branding of so many schools as "failing" has vexed public school officials around the country, President Bush, along with his education reform allies in Congress, could offer Democrats this deal: "Let's agree to limit the number of schools considered failing, but if we can't find room in successful public schools for the kids from the really bad schools, then at least let's give those children a chance at private schools."

Even a limited number of vouchers financed with federal money would be a huge prize worth aiming for. But meanwhile, our education president is now in a position to change the national discourse about the nation's public education system, explaining why it achieves so little, despite spending so much. Instead of merely rebutting his liberal foes' charge that his administration has "underfunded" NCLB, the president needs to go on the offensive and teach the country the real lesson of American public education—that, if anything, we are overspending on the public schools and are not even close to getting our money's worth.

Nothing would be a better classroom exhibit for the president's lecture to the American people than a successful Washington, D.C., voucher program. As Bush education official Rees notes, it will be "rigorously studied" by supporters and critics of choice alike—which is why, she says, "I am spending 75 percent of my time on the D.C. program, making sure it is implemented well and sold to parents." The Census Bureau has just released figures showing that the D.C. public school district spends a mind-boggling $13,400 per pupil—higher than any state in the union. Yet as everyone now knows, Washington has the worst schools in the country. When, as is likely, thousands of D.C. voucher recipients manage to find perfectly decent schools for $7,500 or less, even the most mathematically challenged taxpayers will comprehend just how much the public education system that President Bush has valiantly worked to reform has been ripping them off. And then, perhaps, the idea of school choice will begin to seem as sensible and commonplace as compulsory schooling itself.

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In Defense of Memorization

Progressive educators call it "drill and kill," but learning poetry by heart empowers kids.

Michael Knox Beran

If there's one thing progressive educators don't like it's rote learning. As a result, we now have several generations of Americans who've never memorized much of anything. Even highly educated people in their thirties and forties are often unable to recite half a dozen lines of classic poetry or prose.

Yet it wasn't so long ago that kids in public schools from Boston to San Francisco committed poems like Shelley's "To a Skylark" and Tennyson's "Ulysses" to memory. They declaimed passages from Shakespeare and Wordsworth, the Psalms and the Declaration of Independence. Even in the earliest grades they got by heart snippets of "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere" or "Abou Ben Adhem." By 1970, however, this tradition was largely dead.

Should we care? Aren't exercises in memorizing and reciting poetry and passages of prose an archaic curiosity, without educative value?

That too-common view is sadly wrong. Kids need both the poetry and the memorization. As educators have known for centuries, these exercises deliver unique cognitive benefits, benefits that are of special importance for kids who come from homes where books are scarce and the level of literacy low. In addition, such exercises etch the ideals of their civilization on children's minds and hearts.

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Greek educators, like this teacher instructing his student, stressed the memorization of Homer.

The memorization and recitation of the classic utterances of poets and statesmen form part of a tradition of learning that stretches back to classical antiquity, when the Greeks discovered that words and sounds—and the rhythmic patterns by which they were bound together in poetry—awakened the mind and shaped character. They made poetry the foundation of their pedagogy. Athenian schoolboys learned by heart the poetry of Homer, through which they gained mastery of their language and their culture. They memorized as well, in versified form, the civic pronouncements of Solon, the founder of the Athenian political tradition.

In every epoch of Western history we find educators insisting that their pupils serve an apprenticeship in the work of masters of poetry and rhetoric. Saint Augustine, as a schoolboy in North Africa in the fourth century, studied only a very few Latin classics in school, principally

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Virgil's *Aeneid*, great chunks of which he learned by heart. But within its "narrow limits," the historian Peter Brown wrote in his life of the saint, the education the young Augustine received was "perfectionist." "Every word, every turn of phrase of these few classics," Brown observed, "was significant and the student saw this." The "aim was to measure up to the timeless perfection of the ancient classic."

Some of the ancient methods, Brown conceded, strike a modern mind as "servile": but the paradoxical result of this early servitude was mental liberation. Augustine, Brown wrote, came "to love what he was learning. He had developed, through this education, a phenomenal memory, a tenacious attention to detail, an art of opening the heart, that still moves us as we read his *Confessions*." In Virgil's epic picture of the multiple passions of human life—paternal, filial, pious, romantic, patriotic, heroic—Augustine found a key to understanding his own heart, and in the rhetorical perfection of the *Aeneid*'s speeches he found a key with which to unlock the hearts of others. Virgil depicts Aeneas using his oratorical skill to steady, in adversity, the nerves of his men and build up what would become the Roman Empire:

> *Durate, et vosmet rebus servate secundis.*
> [Endure, and preserve yourselves for better things.]

Augustine would later use a similar set of rhetorical tools to build up the Roman Catholic Church.

More than a millennium later, in a grammar school in Stratford-upon-Avon, the mind of the young Shakespeare was formed by similar educational methods. In his book on Shakespeare, Michael Wood observed that the poet "was the product of a memorizing culture in which huge chunks of literature were learned by heart." Such "learning by rote," Wood wrote, "offers many rewards, not least a sense of poetry, rhythm and refinement—a heightened feel for language," as well as an abundance of tales and myths, imaginative resources that are among the "most exciting gifts" a young person can receive.

"Well into the 1920s, rhyme-time occupied an important place in New York City public schools."

These classic techniques of enveloping kids as young as seven or eight in the works of masters of poetry and rhetoric were transplanted to America, where they were incorporated into the readers and primers used throughout the country in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Well into the 1920s, rhyme-time occupied an important place in New York City public schools. Citing Edgar Allan Poe's dictum that poetry is "the rhythmical creation of beauty," the Board of Education, in its 1927 *Course of Study in Literature for Elementary Schools*, insisted on the importance of memorizing both poetry and prose orations. "The teacher," the Board said, "should emphasize the rhythm, the beauty of diction, and the beauty of imagery [in a poem]. . . . Teachers should read a group of five poems somewhat similar in style and related in subject matter, so that the pupils may choose their favorite for memorization." A "class may memorize only a part of a longer poem, or one or more selected stanzas, for the whole poem may not be suitable for memorization. Whenever possible, the lullabies and poems of the lower and middle years should be sung or presented by phonograph records. Much of our stirring patriotic verse has been set to music. Records of such songs are available."

The standard of literacy in the 1927 *Course of Study in Literature for Elementary Schools* is astonishingly high. Poems "for reading and memorization" by first-graders include those of Robert Louis Stevenson ("Rain" and "The Land of Nod"), A. A. Milne ("Hoppity"), Christina Rossetti ("Four Pets"), and Charles Kingsley ("The Lost

ERITREAN PAINTER (5TH CENTURY BCE), THE POET LINO INSTRUCTS HIS STUDENT MOUSAIOS, MEDALLION ON RED FIGURE KYLIX (DRINKING CUP) TONDO 440-435 BCE RÉUNION DES MUSEES NATIONAUX/ART RESOURCE, NY

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Virgil's poetic description of the exploits of Aeneas, shown here rescuin

Doll") Second-graders grappled with poems by Tennyson ("The Bee and the Flower"), Sara Coleridge ("The Garden Year"), and Lewis Carroll ("The Melancholy Pig"). In third grade came Blake's "The Shepherd" and Longfellow's "Hiawatha," while fourth grade brought Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Emily Dickinson, and Kipling. In the grades that followed, students read and recited poems by Arnold, Browning, Burns, Cowper, Emerson, Keats, Macaulay, Poe, Scott, Shakespeare, Southe
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the words—a remarkable fact, since there were more than fifty children present and this was only the second week of school." This was at a time when more than 200,000 immigrants were settling in New York each year, and teachers were staggering under the burden of large enrollments.

But the culture of recitation and memorization that prospered for centuries—and that, in New York, survived successive waves of immigration that stretched schools to their limits—declined rapidly after 1940. Even the rationale for such practices was forgotten. "No one seems to remember the reasons for memorizing or orating great poetry or speeches," says education historian Diane Ravitch, who served as an assistant secretary for educational research in the first Bush administration.

"Memorization is a kind of exercise that strengthens the mind, just as physical exercise strengthens the body."

But the rationale is clear and compelling. Long before kids start school, parents begin to teach them language with the primitive poetry of the nursery rhyme. Before a two-year-old can understand the meaning of Little Jack Horner's plum or Little Miss Muffet's tuffet—before he knows what it means to hop on pop or why the pobble has no toes—he delights in the rhythm and rhyme of the verse; and by hearing the music of the verse often enough he comes gradually to understand first the sounds and eventually the words of which it is composed. I tried reciting to my three-year-old, over the course of a couple of weeks, Shakespeare's sonnet "That time of year thou mayst in me behold," and Blake's poem "Tyger, tyger, burning bright." She could understand only a very few of the words; but when I recited one of the lines, she soon delighted in reciting the line that follows as nearly as she could. The music of the verse was as entrancing to her as to any grown-up. Without knowing it, a child who has learned a scrap of verse has been drawn into the civilizing interplay of music and language, rhythm and sound, melody and words—just as educational theory as far back as ancient Greece posits, according to Werner Jaeger in his classic account of Greek education, *Paideia*.

From *The Cat in the Hat* on up, verse teaches children something about the patterns and relationships that bind together the words of which it is composed. Poetry sets up an abstract system of order and harmony; the rhythm and the rhyme scheme are logical structures that a child can comprehend even before he understands the words themselves, just as he can grasp the rhythmic and harmonic relations of a piece of music.

What the child discovers, in other words, is not only aesthetically pleasing, but important to cognitive development. Classic verse teaches children an enormous amount about order, measure, proportion, correspondence, balance, symmetry, agreement, temporal relation (tense), and contingent possibility (mood). Mastering these concepts involves the most fundamental kind of learning, for these are the basic categories of thought and the framework in which we organize sensory experience. Kids need to become familiar with them not only through exercises in recitation and memorization, but also, as they proceed to the later grades, by construing, analyzing, and diagramming particular verses. In *The Idea of a University*, John Henry Newman called this close study of language "a discipline in accuracy of mind," a "first step in intellectual training" that impresses on young minds notions of "method, order, principle, and system; of rule and exception, of richness and harmony." And of course memorization is a kind of exercise that strengthens the powers of the mind, just as physical exercise strengthens those of the body.

No less important, memorizing poetry turns on kids' language capability. It not only teaches

GIBBS, HENRY (C 1631-1713). AENEAS AND ANCHISES FLEEING BURNING TROY, 1654. OIL ON CANVAS. TATE GALLERY, LONDON/ART RESOURCE, NY

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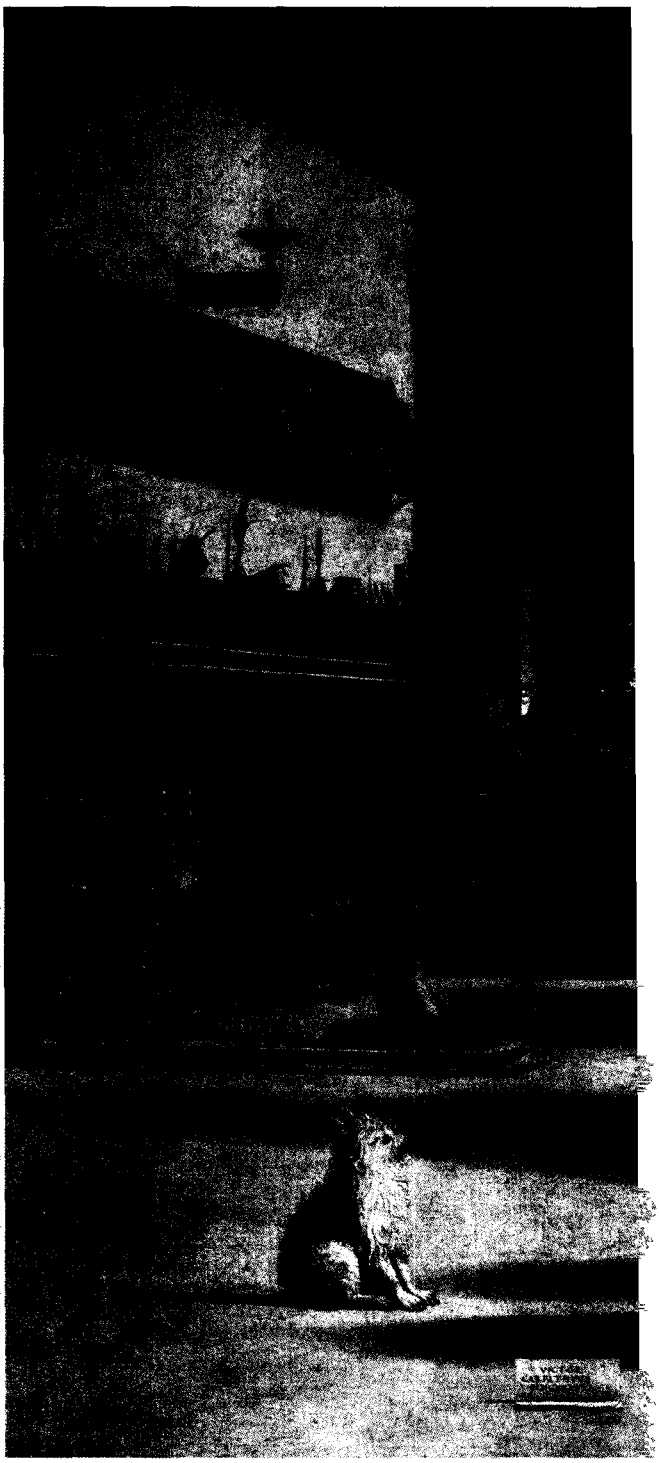
them to articulate English words; it heightens their feel for the intricacies and complexities of the English language—an indispensable attainment if they are to go on to speak, write, and read English with ease. Susan Wise Bauer, author of *The Well-Educated Mind: A Guide to the Classical Education You Never Had*, argues that memorization "builds into children's minds an ability to use complex English syntax." The student "who memorizes poetry will internalize" the "rhythmic, beautiful patterns" of the English language. These patterns then become "part of the student's 'language store,' those wells that we all use every day in writing and speaking." Without memorization, the student's "language store," Bauer says, will be limited: memorization stocks "the language store with a whole new set of language patterns."

It also stocks those bins with a generous supply of the English language's rich accumulation of words. Research suggests that the size of a child's vocabulary plays an important part in determining the quality of his language-comprehension skills. "The greater and wider the vocabulary," says education historian Ravitch, "the greater one's comprehension of increasingly difficult material." Bauer points out that if "a student reads a word in a novel, she might or might not remember it for later use. But when she commits it to memory in proper context (as the memorization of lines of poetry requires), she is much more likely to have it at her 'mental fingertips' for use in her own speaking and writing."

All these benefits are especially important for inner-city kids. Bill Cosby recently pointed to the tragedy of the black kids he sees "standing on the corner" who "can't speak English." "I can't even talk the way these people talk," Cosby said: "'Why you ain't. Where you is.'" To kids who have never known anything but demotic English, literary English is bound to seem an alien, all but incomprehensible dialect. Kids who haven't been exposed to the King's English in primary school or at home will have a hard time, if they get to college, with works like *Pride and Prejudice* and *Moby Dick*. In too many cases, they will give



CARPACCIO, VITTORE (1455-1525). SAINT AUGUSTINE'S VISION, (CA. 1502) ERICH LESSING/ART RESOURCE, NY

. . . formed the basis of the education of Saint Augustine, who memorized much of the *Aeneid*.

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up entirely, unable to enter the community of literate citizens—and as a result will live in a world of constricted opportunity.

It is not only the form of poetry—its rhyme and meter—that endows it with unique educative properties. Just as crucial is its content. Poetry's power makes it the ideal medium to introduce kids to their cultural inheritance as members of Western civilization and citizens of a particular nation. The content of the poetry fosters what education reformer E. D. Hirsch, Jr. calls "cultural literacy" in the kids who get it by heart, since great poetry is so often a pithy expression of the culture's accumulated wisdom. Not to have certain works of art in your mental inventory—*Macbeth*, for example, or "Ozymandias" or Psalm 23—is to be shut out, to some degree, from the community of civilized conversation. Peter Brown observed that Saint Augustine's education, with its emphasis on memorization, enabled him to "communicate his meaning to an educated Latin at the other end of the Roman world by quoting half a line of classic poetry." And even today, in the conversation of the educated, a quotation from Shakespeare can speak volumes.

Much of what kids used to learn by heart was an explicit statement of the national creed. The schoolboys of classical Athens memorized the Homeric passages that taught the classical virtues. British pupils learned the great Shakespearean expressions of patriotism and national ideals: John of Gaunt's speech in *Richard II* describing his country as:

> This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle,
> This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars . . .
> This precious stone set in the silver sea . . .
> This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England.

Or Henry V's stirring speech to his troops at Agincourt:

> And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by
> From this day to the ending of the world,
> But we in it shall be remembered—
> We few, we happy few, we band of brothers.
> For he today that sheds his blood with me
> Shall be my brother. Be he ne'er so vile,
> This day shall gentle his condition.
> And gentlemen in England now abed
> Shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here,
> And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
> That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.

American kids learned the Gettysburg Address, as profound a statement of the national ideal as anyone ever uttered; and those who remember as adults Lincoln's affirmation of the nation's dedication to the proposition that all men are created equal—and to government of the people, by the people, for the people—never can lose sight of what makes America exceptional.

The tradition of memorization did not survive the progressive revolution in American schools. A century ago, progressive educators first voiced the arguments that would have such an unfortunate effect in U.S. classrooms. To impose classic poetry and rhetoric on young minds was, these theorists maintained, an oppressive act. Not just the memorization, but the literary culture at the heart of the exercise, was, they claimed, sterile and unfruitful, and promoted a culture of servility harmful to the free creative play of the mind. "We must overcome the fetichism of the alphabet, of the multiplication table, of grammars, of scales, and of bibliolatry," progressive educator G. Stanley Hall said in 1901. "The true center of correlation on the school subjects is not science, nor literature, nor history, nor geography, but the child's own social activities."

The progressives' efforts to discredit the older techniques are not yet finished. The most recent challenge to recitation and memorization exercises comes from a theory known as "constructivism," the latest fad among progressive educators. Based on the work of Swiss developmental psychologist Jean Piaget, constructivism rests on the belief that objective knowledge does not exist; students must therefore "construct knowledge

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for themselves." Education professor Linda Darling-Hammond of Stanford calls constructivism the "new paradigm" and argues that because "learners actively construct" their own knowledge, teachers "must construct experiences for" their students to enable them to learn. In the view of constructivist educators, the teacher who gives a kid Portia's speech, "The quality of mercy is not strain'd," or Coleridge's "Kubla Kahn" to memorize, fails to construct an atmosphere in which "dynamic" or "authentic" learning (to use two constructivist buzzwords) can occur. Memorization, one advocate of constructivism asserts, "is not a thinking activity."

The constructivist literature is filled with unintentionally ludicrous jargon. "Constructivist teachers," one educator declares, "must create an open, nonjudgmental environment that permits students to construct, disclose, and expose their constructions to scrutiny." Another maintains that constructivism gives students "ownership of what they learn"—as if memorization doesn't. But fundamentally, writes University of Alabama professor George E. Marsh II, the "impetus for constructivism as an educational movement stems from a reaction to the over-reliance in classrooms on rote memorization"—not just of poetry but of facts and dates, of tables and formulas. Marsh says that "memorizing the knowledge others have created is often not successful because knowledge is not a ready-made, transferable product but rather a product of the learner's thinking." Another educator, Asghar Iran-Nejad, argues that constructivist techniques can serve as "a substitute for memorization in learning." Darling-Hammond echoes this sentiment when she advises teachers to "make sure the emphasis is on powerful learning, not rote memorization."

Constructivism is a new name for the old progressive desire to turn kids into little anarchs who—if the progressives' daydreams come true—will grow up to overthrow the oppressive civilization into which they had the misfortune to be born. An education Ph.D. enamored of the constructivist theory argues that because constructivism "de-emphasizes the rote-memorization" of material, it promotes "teaching practices that are rich in conversation. Through these conversations, the teacher comes to understand what the learner wants to learn." Kids, in other words, should be free to do as they please; the teacher, in the role of "guide on the side" rather than "sage on the stage," should cater to their whims; anything else is galley slavery. For progressive educators, to require students to recite "Daffodils" or memorize the Gettysburg Address is a relic of a "drill and kill" culture that inhibits the development of the self and is the educational equivalent of a chain gang.

"Poetry's power makes it the ideal medium to introduce kids to their cultural inheritance."

But the progressives' educational philosophy is only superficially a philosophy of liberty. The progressive exercises in "guided fantasy" and "sensitivity training" that have replaced memorization and recitation do little to free kids' selves. The older techniques, by contrast, are genuinely liberating. They build up in the child a more powerful mental instrument, one that will allow him, in later life, to make good use of his freedom. They cultivate those critical powers that enable an educated adult to question authority intelligently. The older techniques also unlock doors in the interior world of the soul. Classic poetry and rhetoric give kids a language, at once subtle and copious, in which to articulate their own thoughts, perceptions, and inchoate feelings. They help awaken what was previously dormant, actualize what was before only potential, and so enable the young person to fulfill the injunction of Pindar: "Become what you are."

This kind of memorization does not impose upon young minds a single dogma, nor does it exalt, as the Islamic madrassa does, a single text

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CRANE, WALTER (1845-1915) OLD KING COLE WAS A MERRY OLD SOUL. ILLUSTRATION OF 'SING A SONG OF SIXPENCE' (LONDON, C. 1870). IMAGE SELECT/ART RESOURCE, NY

Learning nursery rhymes by heart is often a child's first experience of the power and logic of poetry.

above all others. If anything, it is the progressive liturgies—with their "diversity" drills and cult of self-esteem—that embody a narrow and intolerant ideology, one that imprisons kids in the banal clichés of the present and puts much of the past off limits, as though the moral and spiritual inheritance of Western civilization were somehow taboo. The literary culture at the heart of these exercises in memorization, by contrast, is a record of how men and women have, in various times and places, struggled to understand themselves and make sense of their natures. Such culture does not repress or enslave: it enlarges and strengthens and frees.

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The Housing Reform That Backfired

"Section 8" vouchers were supposed to revolutionize subsidized housing—but only expanded it.

Howard Husock

How come liberal Democrats are flocking to the defense of the Section 8 housing voucher program, invented by Republicans as a "market-based" alternative to public housing projects? From the *New York Times* editorial page and Senator Hillary Clinton, to advocates like the National Low Income Housing Coalition, liberals have railed against Bush administration efforts to change the program's rules and rein in its growing size and cost. A look at the program in New York City, where it has reached mammoth proportions, makes clear why it has attracted such defenders. Far from protecting "our most vulnerable residents," as Senator Clinton puts it, housing vouchers are a last redoubt of the Democrat-sponsored entitlement culture that wreaked such harm on the poor and vulnerable over the last four decades by making them perpetually dependent.

Housing vouchers—in New York and across urban America—originated 30 years ago, with "Section 8" of the Nixon-era National Housing Act. The program's rationale was straightforward: instead of placing an aid recipient in a housing project—viewed as a failed experiment because of the projects' expense and disorder—the federal government would provide a voucher that subsidized the rent in a privately owned apartment. Conservatives have supported the voucher plan over the years chiefly because of its seeming free-market component, and because it does not impose on the government the considerable cost of building and maintaining public housing. But whatever Republican hopes, the voucher initiative operated from its inception just like any other no-strings-attached welfare program—and it continues to do so today, eight years after the nation ended the federal welfare entitlement and lifted hundreds of thousands of formerly dependent welfare mothers into lives of work and greater personal responsibility.

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Almost alone among post–welfare reform social programs, Section 8 remains an open-ended benefit, with no time limit. And the benefit it provides is hefty. The median rent that voucher tenants pay in New York, for example, works out to just $220 a month, and many voucher recipients pay $100 or less. The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), at federal taxpayers' expense, pays a landlord the remainder of the going rate of $1,180 for a two-bedroom unit and $1,476 for a three-bedroom (utilities included) that the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) approves for the city. Since the law requires that 75 percent of housing vouchers must go to households earning less than 30 percent of an area's median income, the entitlement overwhelmingly supports single-parent households, America's poorest. In other words, housing vouchers abet, just as pre-reform welfare did, the formation and continuation of such households—those most at risk of remaining in long-term poverty and of raising children who end up in the underclass.

That Section 8 is today's face of dependency is most apparent in New York, home to far more voucher holders than any other U.S. city. Even as Gotham's welfare rolls shrank dramatically after welfare reform, the city's housing voucher program ballooned. NYCHA's allotment of vouchers has risen 21 percent, from 74,000 to 90,000, over the past four years alone. More than 98 percent of non-elderly, non-disabled NYCHA voucher tenants are single-parent households, and only a third of the parents work. The average time they spend in the program is over eight years, with more than a third of the recipients supported ten years or longer. The authority spends a staggering $700 million yearly in federal funds on the program and employs 740 people to administer it.

As large as NYCHA's Section 8 voucher population is, however, it represents little more than half of the city's total. New York's Department of Housing Preservation and Development administers an additional 25,000 Section 8s, chiefly in apartments that Gotham has helped renovate, at the expense of city taxpayers, whose hefty federal taxes already help support HUD. State government and the regional HUD office manage another 57,000 Section 8s in the city, in complexes such as East New York's Starrett City. In total, New York City, with 172,000 Section 8s of one kind or another, not only has more voucher tenants than any other city; it has more than any state, save California, with a population vastly greater than Gotham's.

The Section 8 universe is expanding all over the country, not just in New York. Since 1998, the overall federal budget for housing vouchers has rocketed 167 percent, from $6 billion to $16 billion. Section 8s consume 51 percent of the entire HUD budget, up from 36 percent five years ago, and the 2.1 million households now holding vouchers nationally far outnumber the 1.3 million households in public housing proper. In some cities—Chicago most notably—housing vouchers have actually replaced much of the public housing system, as housing authorities have "vouchered out" tenants and bulldozed notoriously blighted high-rise projects.

In New York, however, there's not much vouchering out going on. Even as NYCHA's voucher population has exploded, the city's existing publicly owned and operated public housing—with 181,000 units, the largest traditional system in the U.S.—has stayed stubbornly in place. The Section 8 program, in other words, has become a huge parallel public housing system, nearly doubling New York's overall quantity of subsidized housing.

A major social benefit of a private rental market is its promotion of responsible behavior. Tenants must establish a good credit history, save money for their security deposits, come with good references from employers, pay the rent on time, maintain their apartments decently, and keep an eye on their children to avoid eviction. Part of the support for the Section 8 program has rested on the belief that it will have similarly beneficial effects, thanks to its market component. But the Section 8 vouchers in reality

Concentrated ghettos of subsidized housing make entire areas of New York hard to renew.

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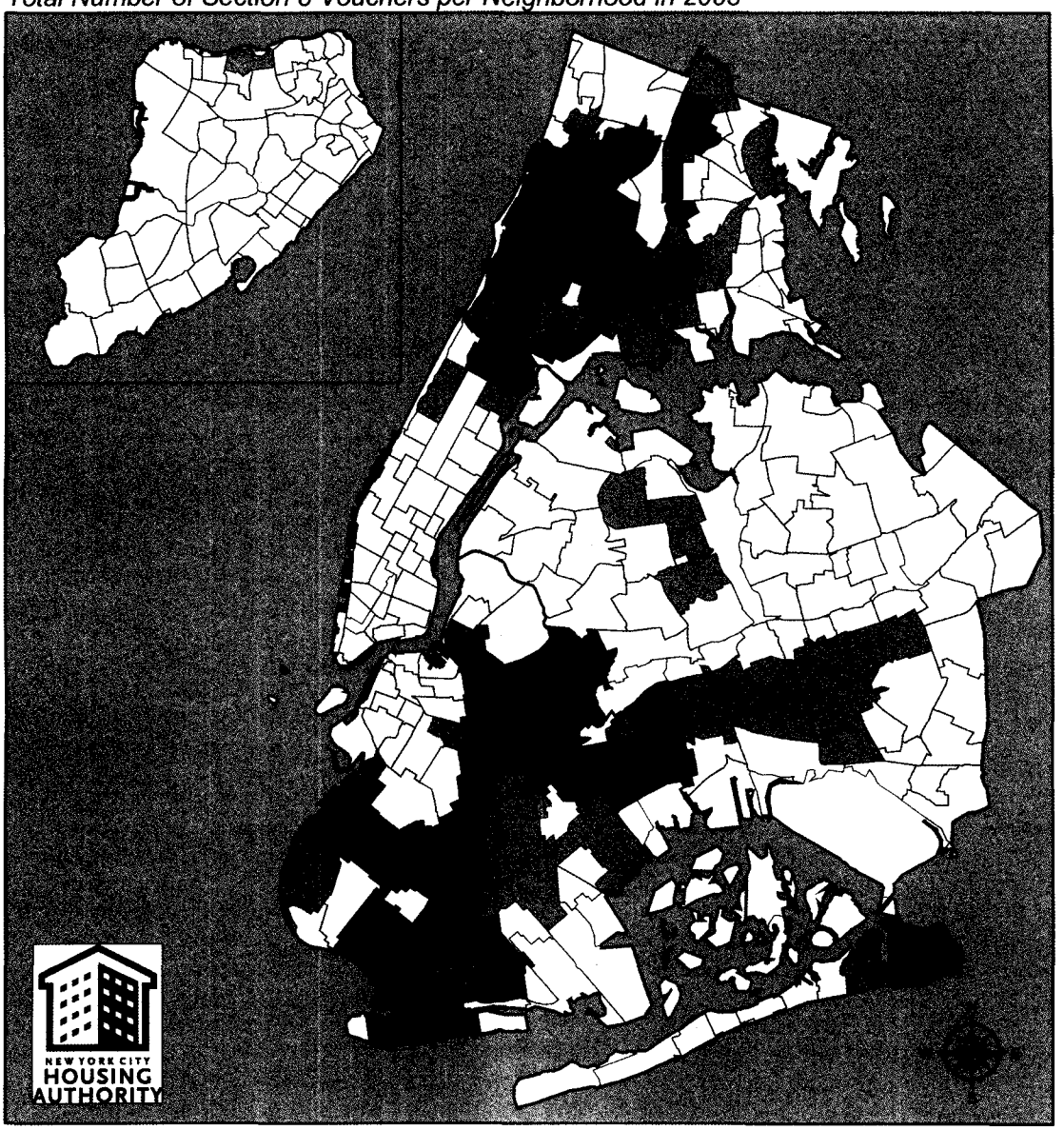
New York City Housing Authority

Total Number of Section 8 Vouchers per Neighborhood in 2003



Data Sources:
New York City Housing Authority - Leased Housing Department Tenant Data File, December 31, 2003

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establish nothing like a true private rental market and so have none of those good effects. On the contrary: just like the old welfare system, housing vouchers promote dependency and subsidize irresponsibility.

To begin with, the route to a housing voucher in New York, perversely, begins in that great school of dependency, the homeless shelter. NYCHA gives families in the shelters highest priority for receiving apartment vouchers, viewing them as the neediest of the needy. As an equally perverse result, no matter how many vouchers NYCHA hands out to shelter families, the number of families entering the shelters continues to rise, rocketing to 9,200 in 2003, up from 5,192 three years earlier. A NYCHA official characterizes the process as "feeding the monster"—an increased supply of subsidized housing boosts demand and spurs thousands of New York families, almost all of them headed by single mothers, to flood the shelters so that they can move to the head of the line to get vouchers. In other words, increased subsidized housing creates more homelessness.

Housing advocates charge that the influx simply reveals the full extent of New York City's grave housing crisis. But it's important to be clear about the situation of most of New York's "homeless" families. Almost none had been sleeping on the streets or in the tunnels of Grand Central Terminal before showing up at one of the city's emergency intake units, claiming homelessness. One former high-ranking official at the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) observes that, in her six years at the agency, she knew "maybe three or four families who were sleeping at bus stations and that sort of thing."

In fact, thanks in part to a court order that requires New York to provide permanent housing to any homeless person—with the presumption that anyone declaring himself as such deserves the benefit of the doubt—"homeless" has become a slippery term in the city, its meaning based on the quality of a family's living arrangements rather than whether or not it has a roof over it. The DHS's Eligibility Investigation Unit will classify a household arriving at a shelter "homeless" simply because it finds their living arrangements "not appropriate," says DHS spokesman Jim Anderson. He explains: "That could involve the number of people and the number of rooms for sleeping, the sleeping arrangements—such as the age and gender and relationship of those sharing common sleeping rooms." Or, he adds, "it could involve fire safety or the possibility of domestic violence."

What this amounts to in practice, say those familiar with DHS procedures, is that the department frequently declares inappropriate a relatively commonplace situation in which a new teen mother, still living at home with her mother or grandmother until her baby's presence sparks a family fight, runs off to seek shelter as "homeless"—in order to get herself moved into a government-subsidized first home. It is common wisdom among NYCHA officials that many families moving from the shelter system into Section 8 apartments are headed by single mothers who are getting their own apartment for the first time, though there are no hard numbers to prove it. Nationally, HUD reports that more than 16,000 applicants under 21 receive housing vouchers every year.

The whole process—from shelter to Section 8 apartment—seems purposely designed to force into dependency those it claims to help. NYCHA, for example, runs semiweekly briefings for new voucher holders. Some of the young recipients show up with their mothers, who help them fill out the forms; the meetings remind one of a school orientation, except that here the "students" are being acculturated into dependency instead of getting ready to learn. There's no need for the parental help, as it turns out. Efficient NYCHA officials (and NYCHA is one of the most efficiently run housing authorities in the nation) are there to hold the voucher recipient's hand every step of the way: "Here's your voucher number"; "Meet your 'housing assistant' "; "These are the best days for appointments if you have problems with your landlord."

Voucher holders barely have to lift a finger to find and move into their subsidized apartments. A shelter operator will give a recipient the names of a half-dozen or so brokers with Section 8 apartments available, arrange transportation for

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open-house visits, and even hire a mover, all paid for with city funds. The city also pays the security deposit and provides, through its "Lend a Hand" initiative, pots, pans, dishes, and furniture. (Most shelter residents, a former DHS official notes, "already have their own TVs.")

Once a voucher holder is ensconced in a Section 8 apartment, the program then mires her even further in dependency, because all its incentives tell her not to improve her situation. Because Section 8 rent is pegged at 30 percent of income, any increase in a recipient's wages leads to a disheartening steep rent increase. If she gets a job that boosts her income from $10,000 to $15,000, her rent zooms from $250 to $375 a month. In effect, she's taxed as if she were well-off, at a marginal rate of 30 percent. (Conversely, Section 8 rents go down—potentially to next to nothing—if someone loses or quits a job or her welfare runs out.) Nor does getting married to a job holder necessarily make much economic sense. By pushing the household's income too high, it could cause her to lose the voucher benefit entirely.

"The route to a housing voucher, perversely, begins in the homeless shelter."

Voucher recipients are drawn almost exclusively from the ranks of the city's most disorganized families and individuals, so it's hardly surprising that many do not conduct themselves as model tenants. "Section 8 tenants are much more difficult to deal with," says Mark Engel, president of Langsam Property Services Corporation, which rents out 1,700 Section 8 apartments in five- and six-story apartment buildings throughout the Bronx. "The families are fragmented. There are no husbands, and so there's not as much control over the children. So there are more damages—graffiti, breaking appliances, leaving garbage out in the hallways, breaking the entranceway door." Another Bronx landlord, who leases 700 apartments to Section 8 tenants, agrees. "A lot of those most eligible for the subsidy," he says, "are the least appreciative and the least sensitive to their obligations as tenants—either to owners or their neighbors." They can create truly bad environments. "I'm dealing right now with a tenant, a 29-year-old single mother with five kids and one on the way," he offers by way of example. "There's loud music, teenagers congregating in the hall. The apartment's in chaotic shape—hygiene bad, housekeeping a disaster."

Yet another Bronx property manager tells the story of a Section 8 tenant whose smoke detector went off, prompting her to knock it down with a broom, resulting in the apartment failing to pass NYCHA's annual inspection. Such carelessly inflicted damage is common: NYCHA reports that 18.5 percent of apartments inspected when a new voucher tenant moves in fail reinspection just one year later. Landlords are then obligated to make the repairs and bill the tenants. "Good luck getting them to pay," Engel says resignedly. And, he reports, almost a third of his voucher tenants neglect to chip in even their small share of the rent on time every month.

Faced with disruptive Section 8 neighbors—who sometimes include drug addicts or alcoholics from the city's homeless shelters—normal rent-paying tenants can become demoralized. "Too many people are negatively affected by some of the recipients," says a Section 8 landlord. "Tell me: where's the fairness to other tenants when they're forced to live with people who are not appropriately prepared for independent living?" NYCHA regularly receives letters from tenants complaining about voucher holders dealing drugs, causing excessive noise, or failing to supervise their children.

The misbehavior of many Section 8 tenants exposes the false assumption behind all subsidized housing: that providing the disorganized poor with low-cost but quality housing will uplift them. It's not the better environment that

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encourages someone to advance; it's the hard work and good life decisions that make for the better environment. For all the genial faith of Section 8's market-oriented creators, voucher tenants appear more likely to degrade their environment than their environment to uplift them.

In light of the difficulties Section 8 tenants can cause, why do Gotham property owners participate in the program? The money is great. The Section 8 program comes with powerful financial incentives for landlords with property in poorer areas. "The fact is, you may be able to charge more rent on a Section 8 apartment than for another apartment in the same neighborhood," admits Engel. One major outer-borough property owner estimates that Section 8's "fair market rents," set by HUD, are 15 percent higher than what his units in poor neighborhoods could command on the open market. That the government pays 70 percent of the rent every month like clockwork also appeals to landlords in poor communities, who may otherwise have difficulty collecting the rent on time, or at all.

The regularly deposited sums add up to real money. One New York landlord who rents 1,700 two-bedroom Section 8 units takes in $1.4 million a month in federal funds. Further, landlords get a one time $1,000 bonus from the city for every "homeless" voucher holder (and an additional $1,000 per dependent family member) they house. The city paid out more than $15 million in these bonuses last year. Drawn by these enticements, some 29,000 landlords now lease Section 8 apartments in New York City.

Overwhelmingly, these apartments are concentrated in New York's poor and borderline neighborhoods, since property owners in parts of the city with strong housing demand have no incentive to participate. Community District 105 in the Bronx, for instance, has the highest concentration of Section 8 units in the city (17.8 percent of the neighborhood's housing units); it also has the city's third-highest household poverty rate (35.9 percent). Out of the city's 59 community districts, just 11—in the Bronx, central Brooklyn, and Washington Heights, low-income areas all—account for nearly 50 percent of the city's voucher apartments. Many densely packed Section 8 areas border neighborhoods dominated by public housing projects. For instance, 39 percent of all housing in the Bronx's Mott Haven neighborhood (12,000 apartments) is in public housing projects; the five adjoining community districts have 20,000 Section 8 units. This geographical reality has led NYCHA to invent the term "split household" to refer to families in which one generation lives in a public housing project and the next moves into Section 8 apartments nearby.

This pernicious pattern—in which entire New York neighborhoods become dependent on government rents and are inexorably transformed into poorhouses without walls—poses great risks for the city. Not only does the outsize presence of Section 8 apartments and other subsidized housing in a particular neighborhood bring with it the social problems that often radiate from such housing, but it exacerbates a problem I've called "the frozen city." Just as subsidized households remain stuck, seemingly forever, in the public housing system—the average length of stay in the city's housing projects is an astonishing 18 years, a decade longer than the already lengthy average Section 8 tenancy—so too do the physical buildings those households inhabit remain tied to one particular, low-value use, preventing neighborhoods from upgrading. As a result, cities can't renew themselves through higher-value new uses for property. (One hopeful note: in mid-June, the Bloomberg administration circulated a housing plan that would no longer give residents of homeless shelters absolute priority for Section 8 vouchers. Expect fierce opposition from homeless-shelter operators, who rely on lucrative contracts from the city.)

The Bush administration, to its credit, wants to reform this costly and counterproductive subsidy. New Yorkers should hope that reform succeeds. For starters, the administration's proposed 2005 budget slashes the rate of growth in Section 8 spending: expenditures would go from $16.4 billion to $16.9 billion—only a 3 percent boost, after the mind-boggling 25.5 percent average yearly increase of the last six years. Rate

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increases in "fair market rents" would henceforth rise no faster than inflation.

Even more important, though, is the administration's innovative "Flexible Voucher Plan." It pushes NYCHA and the other 2,000-plus local housing authorities to make vouchers less of an open-ended benefit—bringing U.S. housing policy more in line with the nation's post-1996 approach to welfare.

Here's how the plan would work. Under current rules, a housing authority's voucher funding depends on how many Section 8 apartments it maintains. There's no incentive at all to move people out of subsidized housing and into self-sufficiency. The proposed new rules change all that. Each authority would now get an annual lump sum, or "block grant," and it would win extra administrative fees if it spread that sum around to as many families as possible by giving short-term housing aid to lots of households instead of supporting the same families for years and years, as is now the case. As a result, officials could give temporary aid to working, two-parent families—something that almost never happens today. The new rules also permit authorities to set flat rents, so that households won't face any disincentive to bettering their financial situation. Best of all, the Bush plan allows the authorities to put time limits on program participation.

"If the public stopped subsidizing single-parent families to live on their own, it might discourage out-of-wedlock births."

In an ideal world, the administration would simply slap a federal time limit on Section 8 vouchers and phase the program out entirely. With smart zoning laws and building codes, the private market can provide enough housing for families at all income levels. That's not to say that in a post–Section 8 world single parents with few job skills would be able to afford brand-new apartments—or even to move out of their mothers' houses. But that's all to the good: if the public stopped subsidizing single-parent families to live in their own apartments, it might discourage out-of-wedlock births.

Such a radical approach would be tough to implement at present, despite Republican control of Congress. In fact, it's far from clear that Congress will even sign off on the less ambitious Bush reforms. Democratic opposition is only partly to blame. Congressional Republicans have been AWOL on the housing front—and on urban affairs generally—over the years. Few congressional Republicans even bothered to attend the hearings on the Section 8 reforms. The GOP has largely ceded the field to left-wing advocates, who want ever more "affordable"—that is, subsidized—housing.

This lack of interest partly stems from the shape of congressional districts. Republican voters don't live in cities, where most subsidized housing exists, so GOP pols have little political incentive to focus on housing policy. If they speak out, they risk being branded uncompassionate or even racist. Many Republican legislators remain in thrall, too, to the allure of the free-market term "voucher." They haven't grasped that Section 8s establish no real private market but are instead a classic Great Society–style entitlement that helps perpetuate the underclass.

While Republicans acquiesce in the Section 8 program's growth, urban liberal Democrats use the program's growing funding stream to waft benefits to their constituents, who can rely on them—literally—to pay the rent. In New York, this arrangement helps reelect Democratic congressmen Jerrold Nadler, Major Owens, and Nydia Velazquez, all in districts thick with Section 8 apartments. The result: increased dependency and the undermining of many New York neighborhoods—and many other neighborhoods throughout urban America.

That's why it is important for the Bush administration to get Congress to endorse Section 8 reforms. The end of dependency as a way of life will be that much closer.

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One Step Forward, Two Steps Back

CITY RESIDENTS' ATTITUDES AND OUTLOOK

PREFER TO LIVE SOMEWHERE ELSE IN FOUR YEARS

APR. '04	41%
JUNE '03	42%
AUG. '01	35%
NOV. '91	60%

HOPE TO STILL BE IN THE CITY IN FOUR YEARS

APR. '04	57%
JUNE '03	55%
AUG. '01	62%
NOV. '91	37%

EXPECT "WORSE" CITY IN 10-15 YEARS

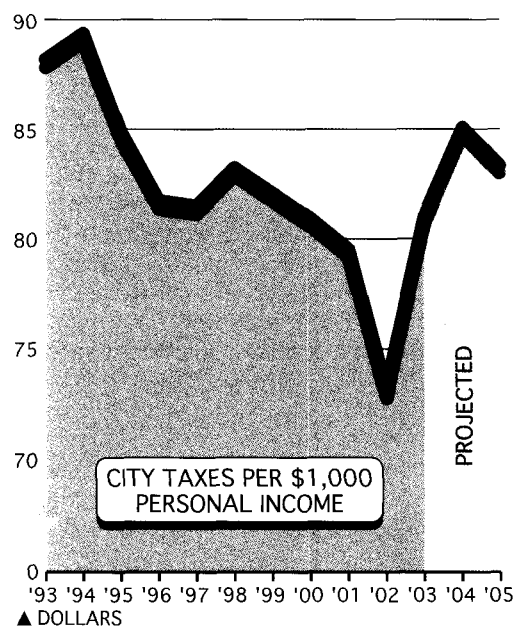
APR. '04	28%
JUNE '03	33%
AUG. '01	25%
NOV. '91	58%

EXPECT "BETTER" CITY IN 10-15 YEARS

APR. '04	33%
JUNE '03	30%
AUG. '01	34%
NOV. '91	19%

SOURCE: *NEW YORK TIMES*

TAXES



SOURCE: U.S. COMMERCE DEPARTMENT, BUREAU OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS; NEW YORK CITY OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET; AUTHOR'S CALCULATIONS

Graphs by Alberto Mena

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City Journal's Quality-of-Life Index shows only partial success for the Bloomberg mayoralty.

E. J. McMahon

Crime, taxes, and welfare dependency all dropped in New York City from the early 1990s through 2001. But halfway through Michael Bloomberg's first mayoral term, only one of these three key indicators was still headed in the right direction.

Public safety remains the bright spot among the quality-of-life indicators highlighted on these pages. Major-felony complaints (the most consistent long-term measure of crime) dropped for the 13th consecutive year in New York in 2003, according to preliminary police-department data. By any statistical standard, Gotham is not only the nation's safest big city; it also has a lower crime rate than many smaller cities, which Mayor Bloomberg takes justified pleasure in pointing out.

Sadly, the same progress hasn't continued on other fronts, as the charts on these pages illustrate.

The city's total tax burden has been rising—reflecting $3 billion in tax hikes imposed under Bloomberg since 2002. In fiscal 2003–04, city taxes are projected to exceed $85 per $1,000 of personal income—the highest level since Rudolph Giuliani's second year as mayor, almost a decade ago. By comparison, in 2001–02 the same figure had dropped to about $73 per $1,000, the lowest tax burden in 30 years.

The steady, decade-long shrinkage of New York's welfare rolls also has come to an end (at least for now). In the fall of 2003, the number of New Yorkers receiving public assistance began rising on a year-to-year basis for the first time in more than a decade—a trend that continued through the spring of 2004. Since February 2003, the public-assistance caseload has increased by more than 19,000. Most of these recipients have exhausted the five-year federal welfare time limit and shifted to the so-called safety-net program funded by state and city taxpayers. Caseload increases continue to be seen in food stamps and Medicaid, as well.

While these trends were unfolding, the city's economy finally hit bottom after two years of free fall stemming from the national recession, the stock-market downturn, and 9/11. By the time New York's job count began to inch up again in early 2004, 30.5 percent of all workers in the city were

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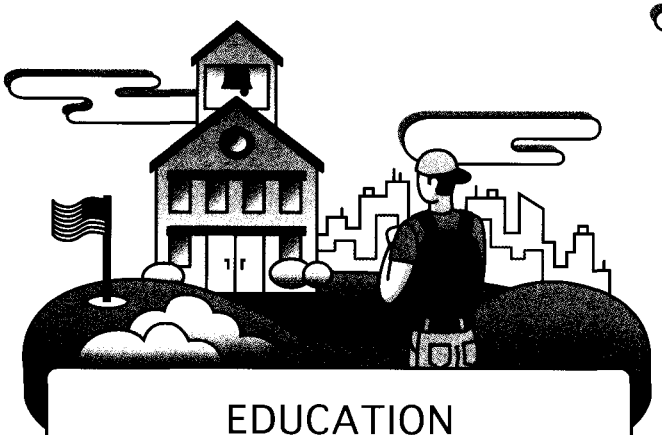

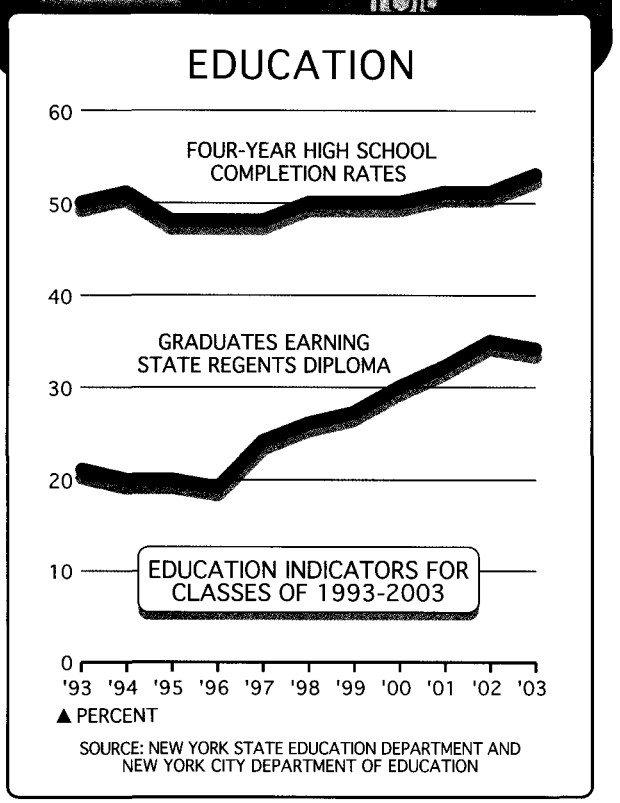

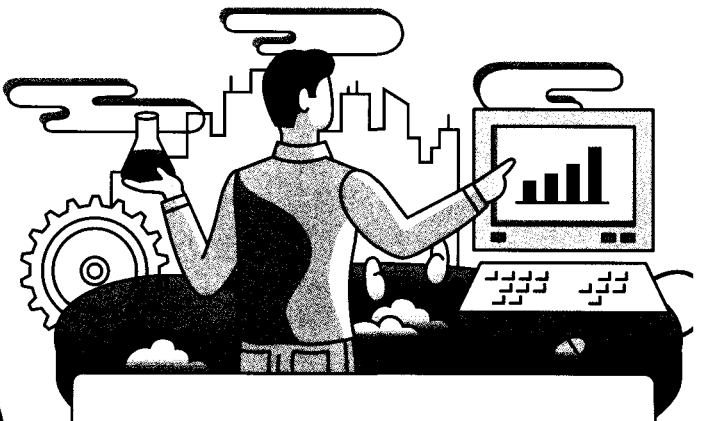

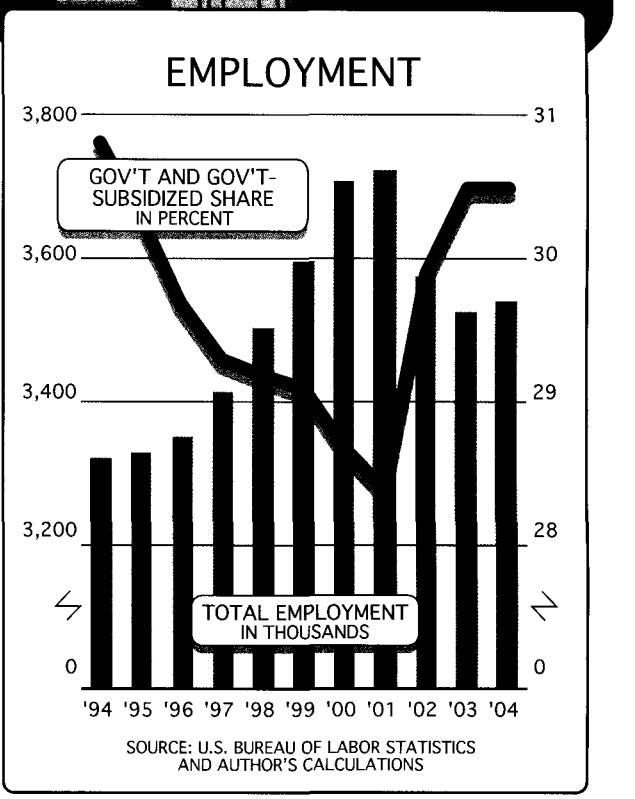

employed either in government or in the heavily government-subsidized "health and social assistance" sectors—a troubling increase of two percentage points in only two years. This job mix, notably more public-sector dependent than the national average of 27.4, also represented a return to the situation that prevailed in New York in the early 1990s, when for every two workers in the wealth-creating private sector, Gotham had one worker directly or indirectly supported by tax revenues.

Meanwhile, after years of stagnation, the school system's ultimate exit measure showed a small performance uptick. Just over 53 percent of the city's high school class of 2003 graduated on time, an improvement of 2.6 percentage points over 2002. But the number of graduates earning a more demanding state Regents diploma declined by a percentage point, to 34 percent.

There remain striking differences in school outcomes for different ethnic and racial groups. While 73 percent of the city's white students graduated on time, the on-time high school completion rates of Hispanic and black students

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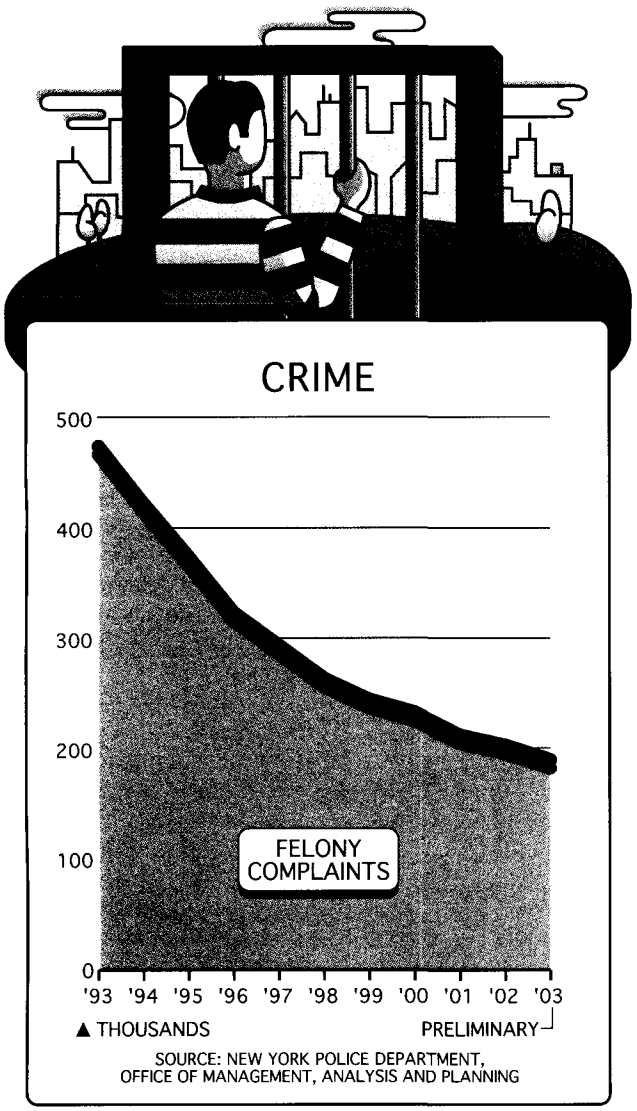

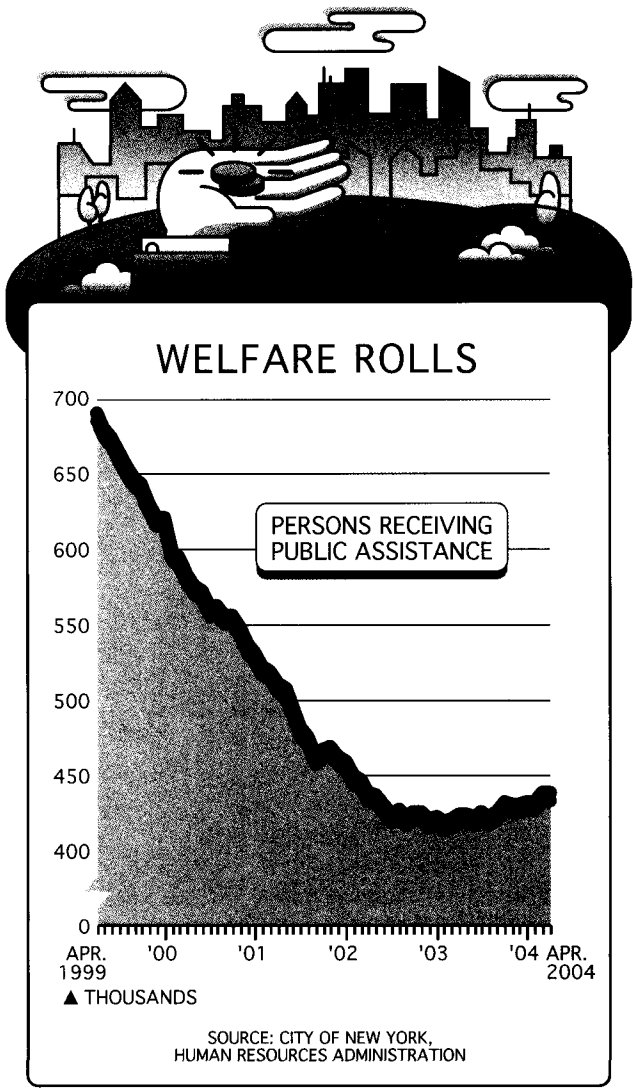

were just 47 and 43 percent, respectively. Many of the dropouts were no doubt victims of social promotion in the early grades, a practice that Bloomberg has now pledged to end.

Despite this mixed picture, New Yorkers' attitudes and outlooks have changed little since last year. In April 2004, 41 percent of New Yorkers said they'd rather be living somewhere else in four years' time, according to the *New York Times*'s survey. One-third expected a "better" city in the future, while 28 percent expected things to get worse over the next ten to 15 years. These measures of optimism were all slightly stronger than in 2003, but still below the levels polled in August 2001. They remain significantly better than the mass pessimism reflected in the *Times*'s survey of 1991, the nadir of the Dinkins era.

As New Yorkers have learned from both good and bad experience, once a trend takes hold, it can be difficult to reverse. Bloomberg's greatest challenge will be to maintain progress on crime while steering the other indicators back on course. Given some of his harmful fiscal policies, it won't be easy. ■

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Hamilton, Our Founder

Richard Brookhiser

Time is the janitor of the great museum of memory, moving from room to room, raising some lights and dimming others, slowly shuffling portraits into and out of storage. The Alexander Hamilton Room, long a bit shabby if never actually shuttered, is beginning to blaze with light and activity, much of it due to the fact that 2004 is the bicentennial year of Hamilton's fatal duel with Vice President Aaron Burr, which took place at Weehawken, New Jersey, on the morning of July 11, 1804. Hamilton, mortally wounded, was rowed to Greenwich Village, where he died the following day. There will be commemorations in Weehawken, New York, and St. Croix, the West Indian island on which he spent part of his youth; the New-York Historical Society is mounting a blockbuster exhibit, *Alexander Hamilton: The Man Who Made Modern America*, which will open September 10 and run through February 28, 2005 (I am the historian curator); Ron Chernow's magisterial *Alexander Hamilton*, published by the Penguin Press, has given him the full-dress treatment that David McCullough gave John Adams.

Readers of *City Journal* came to the Hamilton revival early. In 1996, the editors asked me to write an article on Hamilton as the quintessential New Yorker—the bright nobody who came here from somewhere else and made it, and in doing so remade his world. Hamilton was enmeshed in the civic life of his adopted city: he helped found the Bank of New York; he founded the *New York Post*; he was a student at King's College, now Columbia University (he never got his degree, the Revolutionary War having called him from his studies, though he became a trustee). Here is where he got his first commission in the army and his license to practice law; here is where he conceived the *Federalist Papers* and took the reins as secretary of the Treasury. His last house is in Harlem, and his grave is at the head of Wall Street. He was our forerunner and our brother.

In the years since that article appeared, two things happened—one to me, one to the city—that shed new light on Hamilton. The article became a book, *Alexander Hamilton, American*. In the course of publicizing it, I went with Brian Lamb of C-SPAN's Book TV one cold morning in April 1999 to Weehawken for a modern interview, with a camera, not pistols. I had never been to the tiny park that memorializes the duel, since it has no historical interest. The duel site itself was a rock ledge, about 25 feet long, a short distance above the Hudson River, at the base of the cliffs on the Jersey shore opposite what is now 39th Street in Manhattan. Dueling was illegal in both New York and New Jersey; New York duelists frequented this spot because its remoteness made it unlikely that they would be disturbed. The ledge is long gone, having been dynamited in the nineteenth century to make way for a railroad. The memorial park is at the top of the cliff, on a sedate Weehawken street, surrounded by an iron fence. In it stands a flagpole and a bust of Hamilton on a plinth. Any place in America might have such a thing, and many do: an earnest and worthy signpost, pointing to some event in the past.

Lamb asked his questions, I gave my answers. Then, as we came down the home stretch, a sideways glance made me realize that the thing worth coming to Weehawken to see is in the present, across the river. There was the Manhattan skyline, stretched out like a diorama, from the World Trade Center's towers to Riverside Church, with the timeless futurism of the spires of the Empire State Building and the Chrysler Building crowning midtown. It is our Great Wall of China, our Chartres, not built to keep barbarians out or to bring us to heaven, but thrown up by the meshing efforts of millions of us to make a living and to make life better, here on earth, in New York. "When all the different kinds of industry obtain in a community," Hamilton wrote in his *Report on*

Hamilton as President Washington's secretary of the Treasury

OSCAR WHITE/CORBIS

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Manufactures, "each individual can find his proper element, and can call into activity the whole vigor of his nature." *Industry, activity, vigor*, all in the service of the *individual*—this was the great melody of Hamilton's life, that propelled him from the Caribbean, led him into battle, made him write and plan and slave at his desk. Chernow has found, in the papers of John Church Hamilton, Alexander's son and biographer, that, as Hamilton was being rowed across the Hudson to his duel, "he pointed out the beauties of the scenery and spoke of the future greatness of the city." That greatness, I realized on my morning at Weehawken, had arrived. If Hamilton could see it today, he would say, this is what I imagined, this is what I worked for; use it.

The second Hamilton-related event occurred on September 11, 2001, when the barbarians arrived and the skyline was mutilated. In that awful time, I was still historian enough to remember that the last attack on New York had occurred in 1776. George Washington was commander in chief; Alexander Hamilton was a captain of artillery. Hamilton, stationed in Manhattan, missed the debacle of the Battle of Long Island, fought in what is now Brooklyn at the end of August. When the British landed in Kip's Bay in mid-September, hoping to cut what was left of the American army in half, Hamilton was manning a gun emplacement in what is now Chinatown; a timely warning allowed his unit to retreat up the West Side. He left Manhattan in October, when the British finally squeezed Washington off the island. He would fight in seven battles—White Plains, Trenton, Princeton, Brandywine, Germantown, Monmouth, Yorktown: three defeats, three victories, one draw—but he would not return to New York until the British evacuated, in November 1783.

Hamilton played a minor role in the battles for New York in 1776, although he was here. But he played a major role in 9/11, even though he wasn't. Almost certainly, neither Usama bin Ladin nor Saddam Hussein has ever heard of him. Yet the reason al-Qaida and its helpers and patrons struck the World Trade Center was that the towers symbolized modern America—Hamilton's America. The United States is the epitome of everything the terrorists and their supporters hate, and New York is the epitome of the epitome. New Yorkers vote; *they* dream of a reign of virtue, and obey brutes. New Yorkers work; *they* count their oil revenues, and rail at usury. New Yorkers worship as they will; *they* recite a Koran they do not understand. New Yorkers of all races are free; *they* ship the survivors of raids in the Sudan to the kitchens and bedrooms of Arabia. In each of these areas—politics, economics, fundamental law—Hamilton was on the side of liberty, enterprise, and human potential, and against a world of stasis and arbitrary rule.

Yet if Hamilton had come back to the smoke and the stink, instead of the city at peace, he would still have known what to say. The practical idealist, paradoxically, was well acquainted with the dark places of the human heart. Out of some combination of wisdom, reading, military service, and youthful turmoil (his parents were not married, and his father abandoned the family when Alexander was only nine years old), Hamilton expected the world to be a dangerous place. He located the source of danger in man's unleashed passions. *Federalist* 6 is a brisk review of wars, revolutions, and chaos, all caused by human cussedness. "[M]en are ambitious, vindictive, and rapacious. . . . Is it not time to awake from the deceitful dream of a golden age, and to adopt as a practical maxim for the direction of our political conduct that we, as well as the other inhabitants of the globe, are yet remote from the happy empire of perfect wisdom and perfect virtue?" Though Washington's Farewell Address, which Hamilton helped the retiring president write, takes a loftier tone, looking forward to a time "when we may choose peace or war as our interest guided by our justice shall counsel," Hamilton knew that war would always be a possibility and readiness for it a necessity.

After 9/11, a joke went round the Internet, describing the hijackers arriving in the

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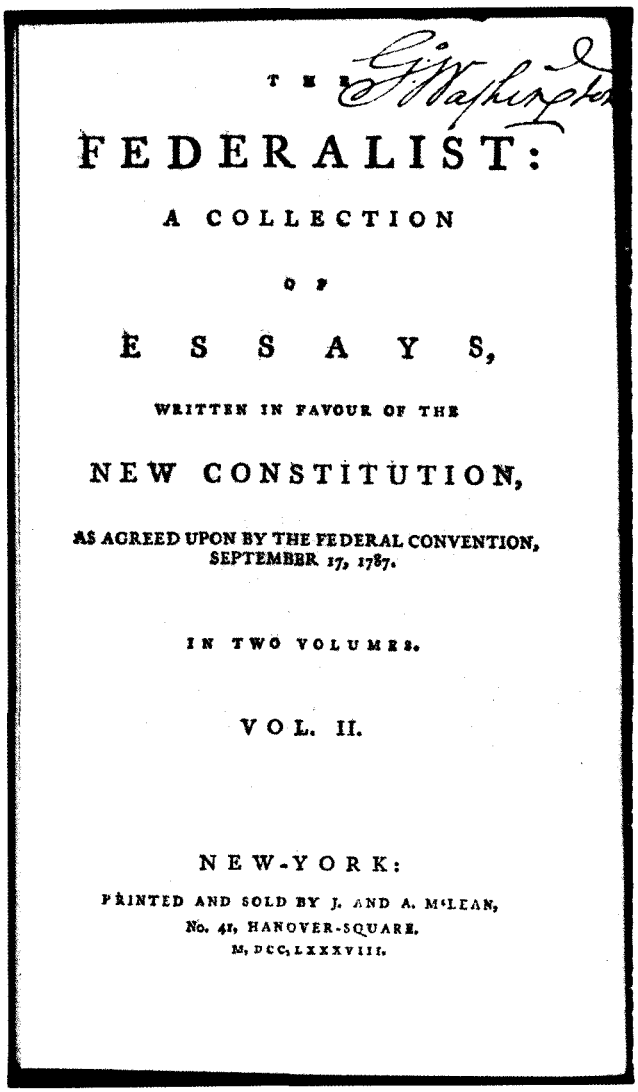
afterlife, where they are greeted by George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and Patrick Henry, who kick and curse them. When the hijackers express surprise, they are told that, after all, they had been promised 72 Virginians. All the great Founders can, by their various examples, help us in our time of trouble, but the great New Yorker, in his bleak alertness, is more suited to this moment than any of them except Washington.

One Virginian who is inescapably part of Hamilton's story is Jefferson. They missed serving together in the old Congress of the Articles of Confederation by a few months, and did not meet until March 1790, when Jefferson, after coming home from France, took up his post as secretary of state in President Washington's first cabinet, alongside Hamilton. During the years that followed, Hamilton would work with Jefferson; he would fight him; and he would back him for president, over Aaron Burr, in the endgame of the election of 1800 (one of many grudges propelling Burr to Weehawken four years later). Jefferson, 14 years older than Hamilton, outlived him by almost a quarter-century. Among the bric-a-brac of Monticello, he displayed a bust of his late rival; historian Joanne Freeman compares it to a hunter's trophy.


THE
FEDERALIST:
A COLLECTION
OF
ESSAYS,
WRITTEN IN FAVOUR OF THE
NEW CONSTITUTION,
AS AGREED UPON BY THE FEDERAL CONVENTION,
SEPTEMBER 17, 1787.
IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. II.
NEW-YORK:
PRINTED AND SOLD BY J. AND A. M'LEAN,
No. 41, HANOVER-SQUARE.
M, DCC, LXXXVIII.

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Washington's copy of *The Federalist*

Their reputations have tended to rise and fall in opposition to each other; it is as if our memory museum cannot supply electricity to both rooms at once. Jefferson, helped enormously by Franklin Roosevelt, had a very good 60 years at the end of the twentieth century. Roosevelt was elevated to office by a crisis of capitalism, Hamilton's system. Searching for a usable hero, he needed an enemy of the business elite, for ideological reasons; a Southerner, for political reasons; and a Democrat, for partisan reasons. Jefferson answered every need. Roosevelt built the Jefferson Memorial and put Jefferson and Monticello on the nickel. In 1945, the year of Roosevelt's death, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., the brilliant New Dealer, published the masterpiece of his youth, *The Age of Jackson*, which carried Roosevelt's legacy into academic history. Schlesinger depicted Old Hickory as the forerunner of the New Deal, and honored Jefferson as the forerunner of Jackson; Hamilton, he conceded, had devised

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"a statesmanlike solution of pressing financial difficulties." Hamilton went into his long eclipse.

Jefferson is now entering a similar eclipse, thanks to his and our quandaries about race. The tabloid form of his problem is the story of Sally Hemmings and her (and his?) children. More troubling, because it shaped the nation's policies, was the long series of evasions and omissions in the last decades of Jefferson's life. Jefferson's cult of the yeoman farmer disguised his, and other planter aristocrats', dependence on their slaves. By the time Missouri applied for statehood in 1819, Jefferson was reduced to arguing that slavery could only be weakened by spreading it over the whole West—a sign of desperate self-deception.

Indeed, our disappointment with Jefferson risks going too far: we should never forget that it was Jefferson who wrote that all men are created equal, and wrote it so memorably that Lincoln could quote him at Gettysburg. Men will die for words that are stirring. But they cannot live by words alone. They need laws and livelihood, security from oppression and terror, and the conditions of opportunity that allow Jefferson's stirring words about equality to become a reality. Al-Qaida understands Hamilton's legacy; so should we.

Hamilton's fatal duel took place 200 years ago on July 11.

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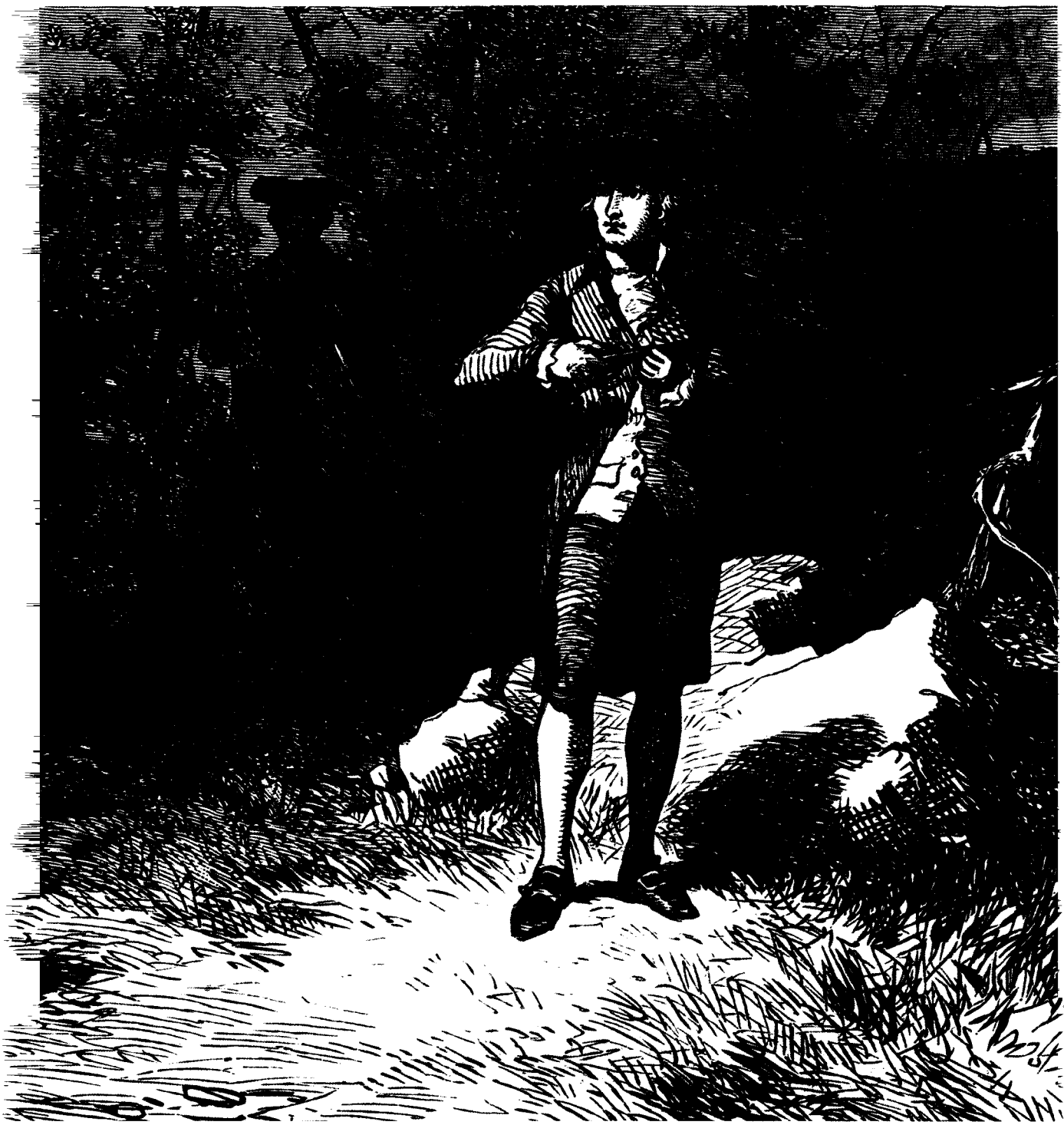

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The Czarinas of Beauty

Stefan Kanfer

We do everything alike. . . .
We walk alike
We talk alike
And what is more we hate each other very much. . . .
How I wish I had a gun,
A little gun.
It would be fun
To shoot the other two and be only one!

"Triplets," from *The Bandwagon*, by Arthur Schwartz and Howard Dietz

The founders of the beauty business were three self-styled czarinas who built their castles in New York City. Here, each professed to be very different from (and, of course, far superior to) her rivals. Actually, they bore such an extraordinary resemblance to one another that they might have emerged from a modern gothic novel, concocted by a singularly imaginative author.

The late Estée Lauder, who died this April at 97, was a short, hyper-ambitious, social-climbing saleswoman who loved wealth, invented her past, dumped her husband when he seemed a drag on her career, peddled emollients and powders that promised eternal youth, and dined out on her aphorisms. Among the most memorable: "Beauty is the will to be beautiful."

Helena Rubinstein, who passed on in 1965 at 94, was a short, hyper-ambitious, social-climbing saleswoman who loved wealth, invented her past, dumped her husband when he seemed a drag on her career, peddled emollients and powders that promised eternal youth, and dined out on her aphorisms. Among the most memorable: "There are no ugly women, only lazy ones."

Elizabeth Arden, who died in 1966 at 85, was a short, hyper-ambitious saleswoman who loved wealth, invented her past, dumped her husband when he seemed a drag on her career, peddled emollients and powders that promised eternal youth, and dined out on her aphorisms. Among the most memorable: "Nothing that costs only a dollar is worth having."

Arden's greatest invention was herself. Born Florence Nightingale Graham in a rural Canadian village in 1881, she helped support her four siblings and widowed father by peddling household supplies to local farmers. In 1907, she emigrated to New York and got herself a job at a Fifth Avenue beauty salon, catering to wealthy clients.

Joining forces with an equally determined woman, Graham opened a salon on Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street, near Sherry's and Delmonico's restaurants, and not far from Bergdorf Goodman's fashionable clothing emporium. Facials came at $2 per, with the bonus of "six treatments for $10.00." Though the salon turned an impressive profit, the partnership lasted less than a year—Florence wasn't cut out to share earnings with anyone. Once on her own, the first thing she did was change her moniker: Elizabeth sounded queenly, and Arden was the romantic forest in which Shakespearean lovers gamboled. The second thing she did was paint the door of her Fifth Avenue salon red. The color remains to this day.

Arden married Tommy Jenkins Lewis in 1915. He spent the next four years in Europe as an army officer in World War I. When he returned, he became part of Arden's burgeoning company but had rather less success as a husband. His usefulness ended in the 1920s, when "Miss Arden," as all employees were to address her, made her big move. She began to advertise her products with a WASP elegance, promising that the step-by-step process—cleanse, tone, and moisturize—was an entryway to wealth and a productive marriage, and a moat to keep age and time at bay.

Arden enjoyed a virtual monopoly on high-end cosmetics until the epochal day when she found an interloper treading on her turf. In *War Paint*, the diverting double biography of Arden and her closest rival, author Lindy Woodhead describes the clash of titans. "Elizabeth Arden was like the Queen of America. Then suddenly here comes Helena Rubinstein from Europe,

Elizabeth Arden

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making a big noise and—absolutely indisputable fact—Arden was good at promotion, but Rubinstein was even better." She proved better still at markup. It hardly mattered that some of her cosmetics cost but pennies to make; it was the promise of glamour that put them across. Indeed, when Rubinstein launched a product called Ultra Feminine Face Cream, it bombed. Asked why it wasn't moving off the shelves, she replied gloomily, "Not expensive enough." She would not repeat the mistake.

Helena—the Madame, as employees were to call *her*—had started her long rise in Australia. She arrived there from Kraków with no money and less English. She did, however, possess a fine complexion, and this was the foundation of her fortune.

The young émigré began by packaging and peddling lanolin—sheep oil—disguising the odor with extracts of lavender, pine bark, and water lilies. That mixture was a hit around Melbourne, giving her the impetus to open a salon in 1903. Two years later, she moved to Western Europe, determined to dominate the continent. Settling in Paris, she sold her merchandise to the *haute monde*, and cultivated people who could do her some good. Helena became famous for lavish dinner parties, where she let loose some memorable statements. At one fete, a drunken French ambassador turned on Edith Sitwell and her brother Sacheverell: "*Vos ancêstres ont brûlée Jeanne d'Arc*!" For all her business intelligence, the hostess spoke almost no French. "What did he say?" she asked a guest. "He said, 'Your ancestors burned Joan of Arc.'" Replied Rubinstein, "Well, *some*body had to do it." On another occasion, Marcel Proust, who had heard of the Madame's connections, tried to consult her about the makeup that a duchess might wear. She blew him off. "He smelt of mothballs," was her defense. "How was I to know he was going to be famous?"

The Madame first married Edward Titus, a sometime journalist and publisher, who turned out to be quite useful for writing publicity releases and for fathering her two sons. But after the Rubinstein cosmetic line caught on, she would no longer tolerate his once-overlooked infidelities. He was summarily let go, unmissed when the Madame relocated to New York to take on Arden in the glamour wars.

During that war, she flummoxed some savvy Wall Street speculators who thought to get the better of her. In 1928, she sold her American business to Lehman Brothers at a profit of $7.3 million, in the days when you could keep it. Came the Depression, she took the company off their hands, repurchasing the nearly worthless stock for a little over $1 million. She then rode the shares into the stratosphere, opening various beauty salons and outlets in Boston, Newark, Newport, Atlantic City, Chicago, San Francisco, Palm Beach, Miami, Southampton, and Detroit. She also acquired a second husband in 1938. Artchil Gourielli-Tchkonia, 23 years her junior, claimed to be a Russian prince. Whether he was or not, he became the *raison d'être* for the Madame's men's line of Gourielli aftershave balm and talc. Some called the marriage a marketing ploy.

All the while, Rubinstein and Arden kept up a public feud—an echo of the mock battle that Jack Benny and Fred Allen waged in their wildly popular radio comedies. Thanks to her marriage, Helena passed herself off as royalty, a move that galled the ultra-snobbish Arden. Elizabeth got some measure of revenge when Clare Boothe Luce's malicious and witty *The Women* opened on Broadway and then became a hit movie in 1939. The opening scene takes place in a high-end beauty salon, clearly based on Arden's flagship locale at 673 Fifth Avenue; the beautiful vixens in the film reminded insiders of Arden's *soignée* clientele—and this despite the Madame's new spa only a few blocks north at 715 Fifth Avenue, boasting a restaurant, a gymnasium, and rugs by Joan Miró. Nevertheless, Luce bypassed it in her drama, well aware that the best dish of the day was served behind Arden's now-famous red door.

The battle of the cosmetic divas was good for business, but the ladies truly did loathe each other. Hardly a month went by when they didn't engage in a

Helena Rubinstein

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duel by checkbook. If Rubinstein commissioned Salvador Dalí to design a compact, Arden would order a mural from Georgia O'Keeffe for one of her fitness studios. If the Madame acquired a new Picasso, Arden would buy a few more thoroughbreds for her Kentucky stable, demanding that handlers wash the stalls with her best-selling fragrance, Blue Grass. The steeds themselves benefited from daily massages with her skin-care sensation, Eight Hour Cream, though with what result the *Racing Form* does not say.

As the years went on, the battles intensified. Arden stole Rubinstein's sales director; Rubinstein hired Arden's ex. Reconciliation between these two egos became unthinkable.

As for Estée Lauder, she too was her own best invention. "Mine is hardly a rags-to-riches story," she claimed. But that is precisely what it was. The daughter of Hungarian Jewish immigrants was born Josephine Esther Mentzer in Queens in 1907, though she liked to boast of a childhood surrounded by servants and allowed rumors to circulate that she was from an old Catholic family. Her father Abraham was the proprietor, in turn, of an agricultural supply shop, a cemetery, and a hardware store. Working in the hardware store, Esther learned how to wrap goods attractively; from her uncle John, she gained some insights about the science of cosmetics by watching him cook up face creams and toothache drops on the kitchen stove. Particularly fascinated by one of his skin lotions, she dubbed it "Super-Rich All-Purpose Crème" and helped him sell it to neighbors.

She reinvented herself in 1925 as Estella Mentzer, and again in 1930, when she married Joseph Lauder, himself the son of Austrian immigrants. Nine years and one son later, the marriage failed. Estée (by that time) had learned a lot about self-promotion by watching Arden and Rubinstein from afar. She concluded that the speediest way to rise in her chosen field was to marry a millionaire. Alas, the interested ones weren't available, and the available ones weren't interested. After a long, discouraging period, she asked a friend, "What am I knocking myself out for with guys? Joe's a nice man." And so in 1942, three years after the split, the couple remarried and had another son.

For 15 years the business remained small. There were Estée, her sons, a daughter-in-law, and a receptionist-secretary. "When people asked for the order department," her son Leonard recently recalled, "my wife put them on hold, came back with a disguised voice and said, 'This is the order department.'" He added, "Success perceived becomes simply success."

True enough. Yet Lauder rose less on smoke than on mirrors. More attractive than her rivals—Arden possessed a pleasant but undistinguished face, while Rubinstein in her later years resembled a terrapin—Estée made her work a personal business. She dropped in at beauty parlors, showing off her perfect complexion, hawking her products away from the standard retail outlets, as if intended only for the privileged few. She was always glad to show potential clients how to apply cream and powders, and did free-of-charge makeovers for anyone with the patience to hear her spiel. These were ingenious tactics that created an atmosphere of intimacy—and produced an ultimate irony. The stuff she carried from salon to salon attracted the attention of retail stores, which soon wanted in on the Estée Lauder line. Bergdorf Goodman was her first big catch; other major emporia followed.

This triumph led her to think bigger. To push the products, she invented gift-with-purchase promotions that brought even more customers into the tent. Then she turned to Europe. Overseas markets were notoriously tough for Americans to crack; to Estée, this was just another pebble in the shoe. She went to the Galeries Lafayette in Paris, for example, and found herself promptly snubbed by the perfume buyer. No matter; she spoke to a salesgirl and, while showing her the fragrance, somehow managed to spill some. The buyer inhaled the scent as he passed the counter and heard customers asking about it. Whether those customers were plants or real buyers, the "accident" had its desired effect. "We opened in France soon afterward," Lauder's memoir drily recalls.

Estée Lauder

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Like the other two czarinas, Estée became a woman of enormous wealth, with houses in Manhattan and overseas. But unlike them, she passed her holdings on to the next generations. Rubinstein's business changed hands two decades ago, and even her famous art collection went on the auction block. Although the scarlet door still decorates the Fifth Avenue locale of Elizabeth Arden, the company was sold in 1988. By contrast, the Estée Lauder Company remains a family affair. Estée's son Ronald, once a New York gubernatorial candidate, stayed with the company until his retirement. His brother, Leonard, who would deliver the cosmetics by bicycle in the early days, is the company's chairman, but will give way to his son William this summer.

Even in this time of Botox and collagen, implants and liposuction, the cosmetics industry still grossed some $60 billion last year and shows no signs of letting up. The siren appeal of a product off the shelves, a concoction that can diminish wrinkles, revive the skin, lighten the smile, and banish the years, remains as irresistible now as it did when Miss Arden, the Madame, and Estée Lauder first worked their magic. Such conditions will probably not change much in the new millennium, because humanity is unlikely to abandon its desire for self-improvement at minimum risk. In their heyday, the three ladies in question would hear many a put-down for selling superficial allure. After all, critics reminded their readers, beauty is only skin-deep. Playwright Jean Kerr spoke for cosmeticians around the world when she retorted, "I'm tired of all this nonsense about beauty being only skin-deep. That's deep enough. What do you want—an adorable pancreas?" That remains the deep-seated belief of most consumers, thanks to the efforts of those vanished pioneers, who still throw a long shadow across the city and the world, a trio with whims of iron and the talent for selling dreams in bottles and jars. ■

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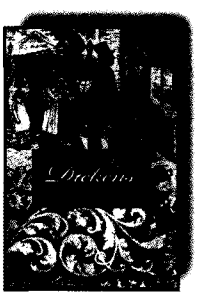

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Multiculturalism Starts Losing Its Luster

Theodore Dalrymple

Multiculturalism rests on the supposition—or better, the dishonest pretense—that all cultures are equal and that no fundamental conflict can arise between the customs, mores, and philosophical outlooks of two different cultures. The multiculturalist preaches that, in an age of mass migration, society can (and should) be a kind of salad bowl, a receptacle for wonderful exotic ingredients from around the world, the more the better, each bringing its special flavor to the cultural mix. For the salad to be delicious, no ingredient should predominate and impose its flavor on the others.

Even as a culinary metaphor, this view is wrong: every cook knows that not every ingredient blends with every other. But the spread and influence of an idea is by no means necessarily proportional to its intrinsic worth, including (perhaps especially) among those who gain their living by playing with ideas, the intelligentsia.

Reality, though, has a way of revenging itself upon the frivolous, and September 11 has seemingly concentrated minds a little. Some signs indicate that in Blairite Britain the pieties of multiculturalism, for years an official orthodoxy, are beginning to face a challenge.

The Home Secretary, David Blunkett, for example, recently declaimed that immigrants to Britain should learn English. Blunkett made this heterodox suggestion in response to riotous clashes in northern England between white youths and Muslim youths of Pakistani descent. Liberals predictably decried his comments as tactless at best and protofascist at worst. Didn't they give succor to the vicious xenophobic elements in British society, perhaps even portending a new dark age of intolerance?

In fact, Blunkett's remarks were both on and off the mark. Doubtless, all of the rioting Muslim youths spoke English. Hardly any British-born young men and women of South Asian descent do not speak it—though some, given the undemanding British school system, speak it poorly. So it is not true, as Blunkett implied, that a failure to learn English was to blame for the rioters' aggrieved sense of being unequal citizens in British society.

Yet Blunkett was right in other respects. Though the rioting youths could speak English, the brides they would bring back from Pakistan would not—and, furthermore, never would. Many women I have encountered as patients who came to Britain from Pakistan 30 years ago, at 16 or 18, still know little English—but not from any unwillingness to learn. Their husbands actively prevented them from learning the language, to make sure that they would stay enclosed in a ghetto and not get any ideas above their station. The same rioting youths who protested British society's failure to accept them as equal citizens have themselves sought to reproduce the unequal social patterns of rural Pakistan, half a world away, because it suited them to do so.

Multiculturalism encourages this stance. If all cultures are equal, and none has the right to impose its standards on any other, what is wrong with the immigrant ghettos that have emerged, where the population (that is to say, the male population) enjoys, de facto, extraterritorial rights? If it is the custom of their ancestral culture to keep girls out of school and force them into marriages that they do not want and to confiscate the passports that the British government issues them for their personal use, what can a multiculturalist object without asserting the superiority of his own values?

Giving further weight to Blunkett's remarks is the silliness of the government language practices that multiculturalism has spawned. For example, one can take the driver's license test in Britain in a startling variety of languages. Spoken instructions come even in the various dialects of Albanian, Kurdish, and Lingala. For the written part, test takers need not know how to read the Latin alphabet (that

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would be discriminatory): officials provide the questions in the script of your choice. Never mind that traffic signs are still in English.

Nor is the driver's test anomalous. Government pamphlets, including those concerning health and social-security benefits, now routinely appear in myriad languages—at public expense. When I went to vote in the local elections not long ago, I saw notices in various Indian languages and in Vietnamese explaining how to cast a vote. And at my local airport, the sign directing travelers to the line for returning British passport holders is written not only in English, but in Bengali, Hindi, Punjabi, and Urdu (each with its own script): proof that the granting of citizenship requires no proficiency in the national language.

These practices send the message that newcomers to Britain have no obligation to learn English—indeed, that the obligation is the other way around: that the British state must make itself clear in Arabic, Farsi, Russian, Somali, Swahili, and many other languages. British officialdom doubtless does not know that the confusion of languages after the Tower of Babel fell was meant as a punishment.

In today's multicultural climate, the general population, it seems, has the duty to be familiar with the immigrant tongues, too. My local public schools now teach Bengali and Urdu, so that the "local" (i.e., white) population may learn to mix better with the immigrant population. While I have no objection to the children of immigrants speaking their parents' native tongue at home, or to the private decision of anyone to master any language he chooses, a private choice is very different from the government's ideological decision to offer such languages (of minor global importance) in the state schools. How not to see such a decision as deliberately subversive of belief in the primacy of European culture—with which, after all, the immigrants have chosen to throw in their lot?

Clumsy as Blunkett may have been, then, he has drawn attention to an important issue—one that makes clear what an absurd and at heart insincere doctrine multiculturalism is. Yet it is also a dangerous doctrine, inspiring policies certain to maintain minorities in their impoverishment, stoke their resentment, and exacerbate racial tensions—while providing employment for a growing number of bureaucrats.

Another Blairite who once uncritically espoused multicultural pieties has recently undergone a conversion: Commission for Racial Equality chairman Trevor Phillips. In an interview with the London *Times*, Phillips, a black born in Guyana, argued that England should abandon the whole concept of multiculturalism, since it was doing more harm than good. Officials should even stop using the word itself, he added.

Phillips noted that Britain has a long and mostly distinguished history of accepting people to its shores and integrating them into its national life, while at the same time deriving benefits from whatever skills they may have brought with them. Britishness has been a cultural, and not a racial or biological, concept with a tradition of tolerance, compromise, civility, gentlemanly reserve, respect for privacy, individuality (evident as far back as Chaucer's time), a ready acceptance of and even affection for eccentricity, a belief in the rule of law, a profound sense of irony, and a desire for fair play: in short, the common decency that Orwell wrote of so eloquently.

Utopian intellectuals, including the theorists of multiculturalism, deride many of these now-weakened British characteristics, on the grounds that they were never universal among the population (but what characteristics are?) and had more drawbacks than advantages. But Britain's common decency proved self-evident to generations of immigrants and refugees, among them my mother, who, arriving in Britain from Germany in 1938, noticed them instantly, to her relief and great admiration.

My family history attests further to British society's generous capacity to absorb. My father, whose immigrant parents never learned to speak English well, attended a slum school during and just after

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As British prime minister Tony Blair seems belatedly to be realizing, a diverse population requires a single national identity, if it is to avoid internal conflict.

World War I, with classmates so poor that they went hungry and barefoot. Despite his background, my father found himself inducted into British culture by teachers who did not believe that the ability to understand and appreciate Milton or Shakespeare, or to make a contribution to national life, depended on social class, or required roots in the soil going back before the Norman conquest. His teachers had the same faith in the liberating power of high culture, in its universal value and appeal, that many British workers then shared. As historian Jonathan Rose has beautifully demonstrated in *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, many ordinary English workingmen, who led lives of sometimes numbing toil and financial hardship, nevertheless devoted much of their little spare time and tiny wages to improving their lives by strenuous reading of good literature, of whose transcendent value they had no doubt—a faith borne out by the success many of them attained in later years.

My father's teachers were the only people I ever heard him mention with unqualified admiration and gratitude. And

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he was right to do so: their philosophy was infinitely more generous than that of the multiculturalists who succeeded them. They had no desire to enclose my father in the world that his parents had fled. And they understood that for society to avoid bitter internal conflicts, everyone had to share important elements of culture and historical knowledge that would result in a shared identity. Not by chance did Trevor Phillips regret 80 years later that teachers were instructing children less and less in the great works of English literature, especially Shakespeare—a deprivation wrought not because teachers were complying with any spontaneous demand from below, but because they were implementing the theories of elite educationists, especially the multiculturalists.

Phillips rightly pointed out that English literature is the perfect vehicle for promoting a shared identity. Not to teach Shakespeare or other giants of British culture is to provide no worthwhile tradition with which the increasingly diverse population can identify. Without such a tradition, nothing deeper than the ephemeral products of popular culture will be on hand to unite that population, even as profound cultural differences divide it. A shared culture consisting of nothing but pop ephemera will likely arouse the justified contempt of immigrants and their children, driving them into ethnic, cultural, or ideological enclaves in search of something more mentally and spiritually nourishing—thereby increasing social tensions, sometimes disastrously.

The shared identity that my father's teachers believed in was not an imposed uniformity, as present-day critics allege; they did not seek to turn out mental clones. Far from it. Part of that shared identity—a source of pride—was inventiveness and freedom of thought, the permission for the mind to voyage forever on strange seas of thought alone (as Wordsworth described Newton). And this shared identity relieved those who participated in it of the need to cling too strongly to other, potentially conflicting, identities. The national identity was strong but loose, permitting a great deal of personal freedom and give-and-take—much more so, usually, than the ethnic identities that immigrants bring with them. Freedom of religious belief was complete, as was practice, provided that it complied with the law and claimed no special privileges for itself. Induction into British culture did not fetter or circumscribe the immigrant, therefore, any more than speaking English determines what anyone has to say.

Britain's openness is precisely what made it so attractive to immigrants. While by no means without blemish, Britain's history of openness (compared with most societies) goes back a long way, and it has allowed many groups of newcomers to become national assets. The Huguenots, for example, immensely enriched British cultural and economic life. Before their arrival, all silk in Britain came from France; after their arrival, most French silk came from Britain. In time, the Huguenots became intensely British—is any writer more British than De Quincey?—but for many years they had their own churches, and some spoke French at home until well into the nineteenth century.

It was this tradition of integration that Phillips eloquently invoked in his interview. Since the chairmen of quasi-governmental bodies such as his are not known for speaking courageously out of turn, his words most likely reflected the thinking of the government, alarmed at the extent of sympathy in the Muslim population for the September 11 terrorists.

Phillips failed to mention one vital difference between previous and contemporary influxes into Britain, however. The relative tolerance and flexibility that he praises were spontaneous, informal, and undirected, without official interference. It simply never occurred to anyone in my father's day that the children of immigrants should or would have a fundamentally different culture from that of the larger population, or that they would have any cultural peculiarities or sensibilities that needed catering to. They would be British without qualification. These immigrants, of course,

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arrived during a prolonged era of national self-confidence, when Britain was either a rising or a risen power. The generosity of my father's teachers grew out of pride in their culture and country.

Since then, much has changed. We live in a time of deep mistrust of spontaneous, undirected social processes—a mistrust of which Phillips's organization is one symptom. The Commission for Racial Equality that he chairs believes that racial prejudice and unfairness can only be eradicated if the government ceaselessly monitors racial statistics for inequalities (several organizations that I belong to repeatedly try to extract from me my "ethnic" group, though I refuse to answer). Paradoxically, the commission simultaneously denies, at least in theory, any underlying reality to the racial and ethnic categories into which it divides people for monitoring purposes, since it takes for granted that any low levels in achievement among the monitored racial groups must result from prejudice alone, not from any differences in the attitude or behavior of those groups. Without official bureaucratic interference, in this view, society will remain mired in racial prejudice. Minorities will stagnate or even retrogress.

In addition, confidence in Britain's historical and cultural record, as embodying anything worthwhile, let alone uniquely valuable, has all but vanished. Those things that the nation once glorified it now derides and satirizes. Not so long ago, the prime minister attacked the very notion that the British past held anything worth preserving, the "forces of conservatism" being for him a synonym for evil. Reality has, belatedly, taught him otherwise.

No doubt the shift in attitude partly results from the collapse of British power and the nation's long retreat from world importance. But it also results from the growth of the intellectual class, whose livelihood depends on ceaseless carping. Thanks to the intellectuals, for instance, the teaching of history has become an ideological minefield, with grievance groups demanding that their ancestors' suffering enjoy special status in the narrative. And if British history and culture are nothing but the story of internal and external oppression, of injustice and exploitation, why should those who come to these shores learn our national traditions and culture? Much better for them just to keep their own. One professor of race relations, Bikhu Parekh, has even suggested that Britain should change its name, which has so many negative historical connotations for millions around the world. Now that Britain has become so ineradicably multicultural, he says, there is no justification for it to be "British" any more.

Such fatuities are likely, and perhaps are intended, to produce an extreme reaction from the native-born population, demonstrating that the original contention was correct: that the British tradition is simply one of violent intolerance and oppression—from which we need such luminaries as the professor, wielding coercive administrative powers, to deliver us.

A new mass immigration to Britain from every region of the globe, in which the differences between the immigrants and the host population are profound, has occurred precisely at the moment when the multiculturalists have helped undermine the capacity of British culture to absorb them, in the hope that "a community of communities" (to use Parekh's phrase) would emerge: in short, that the lion of the Somali tribal ethic would somehow lie down with the lamb of the British law.

To be sure, many people flee their homelands to live under our rule of law. Among my patients are some refugees, most of them people of intelligence, drive, and clear-sightedness. They have no doubts about the benefits of the rule of law, having experienced the opposite in their own flesh and blood. They know what a relief it is not to fear the nocturnal knock at the door and to pass a man in uniform without trembling with anxiety.

They know also that the rule of law is an historical achievement, not the natural state of man. It is a pleasure to hear my refugee patients descant on that great historical achievement. Because of their own experience, they do not take it for

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granted. They know that it arose from a long philosophical and political development, one unique in world history. They know that it is a fragile achievement and easily destroyed.

Recently, a highly intelligent Iranian refugee consulted me. The medical part of the consultation over, we began to chat about Iranian affairs. He was a political philosopher not by training or inclination but by experience and necessity. He felt that, in the end, the clerical regime had done an immense service to the cause of political secularism in Iran, because even previously religious people now deeply opposed clerical rule. The clerics had done more damage to the cause of Islam among the Iranian population by their brutality and corruption than the infidels could ever inflict. His problem, of course, was that he lived in the personal short term, not the historical long run.

He appreciated deeply the British institutions that now protected him. He had experienced occasional hostility from individual Britons, but he realized that it was the product of ineradicable human nature, not of official malice. Above all, he said, Britain had a different history from Iran's—of struggle no doubt, but also of compromise—which allowed us to take our liberty for granted (a dangerous thing to do). It was, he said, a very valuable and inspiring history. What impressed him first when he arrived was how everyone just assumed that he could say what he liked, without fear of retribution—a freedom above price. But he recognized that he could only be part of that worthy society if he chose to fit in, abandoning any aspects of his Iranian culture incompatible with it, which he was only too happy to do. The fundamental demands and responsibilities, he felt, were upon the immigrant, not upon the host country.

It would be vain to suggest that all immigrants are as conscious of these demands and responsibilities as he. And if we are to avoid violently disaffected and resentful ethnic enclaves in our midst, we need to teach immigrants that the freedom, prosperity, and tolerance that they enjoy result from a long spiritual and cultural development, not to be taken for granted, and that they have a magnificence and grandeur.

In the modern multicultural climate, though, there is no quick way of doing this. Because of the ideological cacophony that drowns out this cardinal, though obvious, message, it is impossible to relay it unselfconsciously, as my father's teachers had done. Nor would one wish the message to harden into an official dogma: the answer to a false orthodoxy is not another orthodoxy that denies contrary evidence. We must persuade, not coerce or indoctrinate, and to do so we must first disabuse our intellectuals of the notion—frivolous but damaging—that society should be a cultural salad. ▪

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Letters

Unveiled Hostility

To the editor:

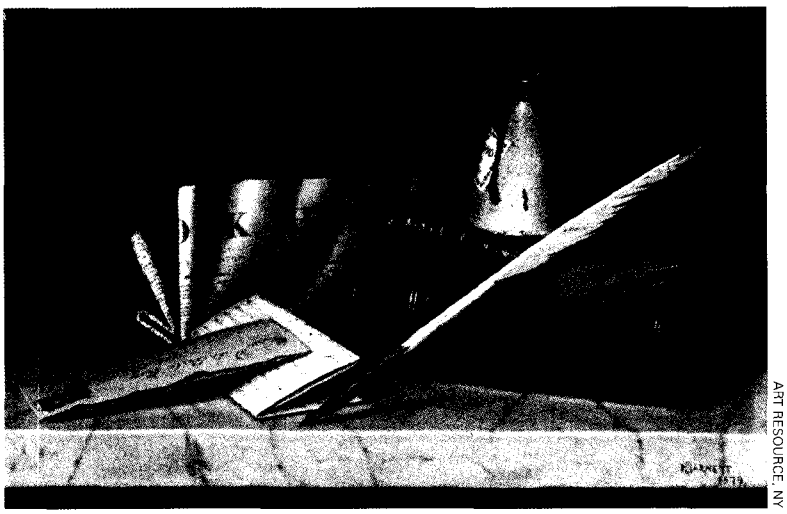
"When Islam Breaks Down" [Spring 2004] by outspoken Islamophobe Theodore Dalrymple is inflammatory, hate-filled, and blatantly false propaganda. His aim is to demonize Islam and encourage further attacks, hate speech, and discrimination toward us.

His descriptions of Muslims are laughable in their inaccuracy and presumption. We are not slaves or concubines to Muslim men; they are our husbands, fathers, and brothers, and we demand—as does Islam—their protection and love. He assumes that, if "social pressure" is lifted, Muslim women would abandon the veil. I wear a *hijab* by choice, as do most of my fellow professional Muslim female acquaintances; we have encountered no pressure, and happily adhere to a religious obligation. This is what Dr. Dalrymple fears: our pride and joy in our faith and its practice.

If we Muslims are such a problem and Islam is so undesirable, why is it the fastest-growing faith in Britain and the world? Why do we boast so many converts? If Islam impedes us so, why are we becoming more and more politically aware and socially active?

The death rattle that Dalrymple hears is only his warped and evil imagination. Will he next advocate the mass extermination of Muslims from Britain and Europe? Even then, there would still be more than a billion of us.

Rebecca Q.
Via e-mail



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To the editor:

Theodore Dalrymple has said it all, and no doubt he will be reviled by many a holy warrior, as well as by the multiculturalists and the sanctimonious race-relations brigade. No matter. It needed saying, and it needs repeating over and over again if we are to triumph over obscurantism and find our way back to reason and civilization.

As an Iranian, as a non-believing Muslim, and as a human being, I thank you.

Mehran Sharmini
London, England

To the editor:

Theodore Dalrymple's excellent article connects directly with my own experiences as an atheist from a Muslim background. The rigid mindset and hatred of dissent that he describes in Islam are all too evident to people like me—and there are many of us, so-called *murtadds* (apostates)—who find ourselves the targets of hatred in our own communities and even our own families. Thank you, Dr. Dalrymple, for writing such an important, insightful piece. Only by more people like you speaking out will life become easier for people like me.

Natassia Khan
Via e-mail

Theodore Dalrymple responds:

Rebecca Q.'s letter rather bears out what I wrote. She regards rational criticism as being a prelude to genocide and vituperation as an argument.

I am extremely flattered by the other two letters. They reassure me that my imagination is not "warped and evil."

So Predictable

To the editor:

I can only assume that Kay S. Hymowitz is psychic. Her forecast of *Fahrenheit 9/11* was dead-on ["Michael Moore, Humbug," Summer 2003]. Or is it that Moore is so predictable?

"Moore will insinuate that the United States created Usama—

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Letters

'or USA-ma, which is more appropriate considering we trained him to be a terrorist.' He will tell us that in the late nineties the oil firm Unocal held a meeting with Taliban representatives in Houston, 'when Bush was governor,' to talk about building a pipeline through Afghanistan. He will imply that this project was the reason the U.S. gave humanitarian aid to the Taliban, until 'the deal went south,' and 'suddenly the Taliban were evil.' And thus, Michael Moore will finally reveal the awful truth that only he is courageous enough to admit about why the United States really went to war with the Taliban.

"And you can be sure that the trendy sophisticates in Cannes and Hollywood will once again rise to their feet to honor their mendacious auteur."

Honestly, I wish I could take this latest polemic in stride. But I found myself near tears as I thought about the hatefulness that people like Moore, Ted Rall, and Ramsey Clark generate—consistently assuming the worst motives from our leaders. It hurts to know that Moore is deceiving so many. The challenge to un-brainwash these lost souls is Herculean.

Brian Couch
Via e-mail

Rebell with a Cause

To the editor:

Sol Stern's "New York's Fiscal Equity Follies" [Spring 2004] crosses the line of responsible journalism.

The article demeans Justice DeGrasse, the trial court judge in *CFE* v. *State*, with insults about a "lack of evenhandedness" and "contorted logic," and outrageously suggests that DeGrasse received his job simply to "maintain existing 'racial balance' on the court." If Justice DeGrasse's ruling was part of some racial or partisan charade, as Stern implies, why was his decision affirmed by the Court of Appeals, the majority of whom are white appointees of the state's Republican governor? And why is CFE's dedicated cofounder Robert Jackson painted as "a black . . . radical," when his ideas about providing educational opportunity for all have been supported by thousands of New Yorkers? In fact, why is Robert Jackson's race mentioned at all?

The article depicts the *CFE* decision as only calling for "more money" for public schools "without changing where the money goes." In fact, the court required the state not only to determine the costs of providing all students a sound basic education, but also to guarantee a system of accountability to ensure effective use of the money. CFE has always insisted that money alone won't solve New York's broken school-funding system. So we worked for six months with an accountability task force composed of representatives of major statewide organizations and national experts from across the political spectrum to produce a comprehensive accountability proposal.

We are fast approaching the court-ordered July 30 deadline. We need substantive discussion of how to reform our damaged school system, not inflammatory attacks on the courts and the representatives of thousands of poor New York schoolchildren.

Michael A. Rebell
Executive Director and Counsel
Campaign for Fiscal Equity

To the editor:

"New York's Fiscal Equity Follies" is mistaken about the evidence on class size on several counts.

First, no evidence exists that a magic threshold of students per class must be reached before class-size reduction effectively raises achievement. Princeton's Alan Krueger found that with class sizes of 22–25 (in Tennessee's STAR program), students did better the smaller the class. Both Krueger and Charles Achilles—another leading class-size researcher—maintain that the relationship between lower class size and higher achievement is linear.

Second, no evidence exists that the benefits of California's class-size reduction were negated by lower teacher quality. Every single one of the eight controlled studies of California's program has found that reducing class size to 20 led to significant gains in student achievement—with the largest gains in urban districts. Though initially the percentage of uncertified teachers grew, the program also led to lower rates of teacher turnover; in poor districts particularly, fewer teachers left to teach elsewhere.

Finally, plentiful evidence now exists that smaller classes are important in the middle and upper grades as well. The U.S.

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Department of Education recently examined student performance on the NAEP exams in 2,561 schools across the nation. Data came from at least 50 schools in each state—large and small, urban and rural, affluent and poor. Controlling for student background, the only factor found to correlate with higher student success was class size—not school size; not teacher qualifications; no other variable the researchers could identify. And achievement gains were more strongly linked to smaller classes in the upper grades. *Leonie Haimson*
Class Size Matters

Sol Stern responds:

My article on the *CFE* case criticized Michael Rebell on several counts for undermining the prospects for reform of Gotham's dysfunctional school system. Mr. Rebell offers no defense of his actions in this case or in his previous role as plaintiffs' lawyer in the notoriously destructive *Jose P.* suit; instead he plays the race card. To employ this despicable tactic, Rebell must deliberately distort what I wrote. Rebell says that I "outrageously suggest that [Judge] DeGrasse received his job simply to 'maintain existing "racial balance" on the court.' " This supposedly "outrageous" charge is a direct quote from New York County Democratic Party leader Herman "Denny" Farrell, who proudly announced that "maintaining racial balance" on the court was his aim in ramming the nominations of Judge DeGrasse and DeGrasse's wife through the county nominating convention. If Rebell is offended by the notion of racial quotas on the New York bench, he ought to take it up with Mr. Farrell, not with me.

Mr. Rebell then uses ellipses creatively to accuse me of "painting" CFE's co-founder, Robert Jackson, as "a black . . . radical." Nice try, Mr. Rebell. I described Jackson as a "black trade-union official" and only in a subsequent phrase as one of the City Council's "most radical members." Not even in the most fevered precincts of the diversity police would anyone consider that referring to someone as a "black trade-union official" was racially insensitive. Nor could anyone familiar with the City Council deny that Bob Jackson is on the far left of that body. And Mr. Rebell has the chutzpah to say that I "cross the line of responsible journalism"?

Leonie Haimson is correct that studies by Krueger and Achilles (and others as well) have found correlations between class-size reduction and improved student achievement. Problem is, Eric Hanushek—one of the country's top education economists—has found through a meta-analysis of 277 existing class-size studies that those finding a positive correlation between smaller class size and improved achievement are far outnumbered by those finding no positive correlation, or a negative one.

Ms. Haimson is dead wrong on California's class-size experiment. A study carried out by a research consortium at the behest of that state's education department found that the effects of the class-size initiative in various districts were either minimal or nonexistent, but the need for hiring many more teachers lowered overall teacher quality.

The problem with class size–reduction advocates—even when they appear to have in hand studies indicating academic improvement, such as the Tennessee STAR experiment—is that they never compare the financial costs of using this remedy across the board with other potential reforms, such as vouchers, longer school days, and extra tutoring. Imagine yourself as the principal of a school in need of improvement. Would you really want to be ordered by the state to reduce the number of students in every class, be forced to hire more teachers of uncertain quality, and scramble for more classroom space? Or would you prefer the flexibility to use the money to suit the particular needs of your school?

National Self-Interest

To the editor:

Heather Mac Donald's "What We Don't Know *Can* Hurt Us" [Spring 2004] was excellent. I'm a libertarian at heart (and in print), but I just don't know how other libertarians can deny the obvious trajectory of entrepreneurial terrorism and the rapidly evolving (and accessible) technologies of mass terror. I suggest that we look ten years into the future and visualize the mushroom cloud rising over Washington (or Manhattan or San Francisco or London)—and

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Letters

start imagining what we could have done *now* to prevent it.

Britton Manasco
Austin, TX

Memory Avenue

To the editor:

Stefan Kanfer's wonderful "The Yiddish Theater's Triumph" [Spring 2004] evokes so many memories. I lived on the Lower East Side for most of my young life, and at 92 Second Avenue, between Fifth and Sixth Streets, for many years. As we know from historical documents, that was once a famous house of prostitution, where the *kurves*, or prostitutes, lived (which is why the Jewish mothers wouldn't let their sons go driving out in the country, because there were signs that said "curves ahead").

Second Avenue was a street lined with theaters and restaurants. There was the famous Moskowitz and Lupowitz—and its competitors, the Original Moskowitz and Lupowitz, the True Moskowitz and Lupowitz, and the Real Moskowitz and Lupowitz—as well as the famous Café Royale, opposite Maurice Schwartz's art theater on 12th Street and Second Avenue, all of which led to Second Avenue's designation as "The Great Bite Way."

My widowed mother would take me to the theater once or twice a week; after all, you could not leave a child alone at night. Her favorite (whom Kanfer does not name) was tragedienne Jennie Goldstein, who would sing such lachrymose songs as "Ich bin a momma, ah vie ist mein kind?" prompting my mother, and the entire audience, to cry. (*Es gisst wasser*, we would say.) But there were also the great quality dramas, such as Sholem Asch's *Die Gut von Nkumeh* (The God of Vengeance) about a brothel keeper whose daughter, in the end, becomes a *nefke* (a prostitute) in the brothel; and Maurice Schwartz's *Yoshe Kalb*, by Israel Joshua Singer, the elder and then-more-famous brother of Isaac Bashevis Singer.

But the great triumph was this marquee sign: THE YIDDISH KING LEAR, UBERGEZETZ UND VARBESSERVIT VON BORIS THOMASHEFSKY [The Yiddish King Lear, translated and improved by Boris Thomashefsky] (the grandfather, it may be noted, of conductor Michael Tilson Thomas).

Daniel Bell
Cambridge, MA

Dawn of the Dad

To the editor:

Thanks to Kay S. Hymowitz for a fact-filled and encouraging article ["It's Morning After in America," Spring 2004].

Even a guy born on the tail end of the boomer generation can relate to this ache for "real family." I'm the eldest of five kids. Our folks are divorced, and four out of five of us have divorced in-laws. (Try to explain to a kid why their grandparents won't speak to each other.) We talk often about reestablishing our family in our generation, and we are committed to supporting one another and our kids to get through tough times. Church is more important to us than for our folks. All my siblings are making a difference in other people's lives, not sitting around myopically probing their own belly buttons, pondering where their self-esteem has gone.

Perhaps Manhattan and Hollywood will catch up with us, but it's not likely—and, really, who cares? *Donald Bosch*
San Diego, CA

To the editor:

Kay S. Hymowitz offers an extremely interesting analysis of current cultural trends among families and children. It's hard not to be captured by the optimism that it suggests we should have for the future.

But I must note that whatever it was that happened to parents in the last few generations, children have never forgotten that parental involvement in their lives is important (probably because they're hardwired to know); and so when we hear adolescents saying that they love their parents' engagement in their lives, it is often a plea for attention rather than appreciation for attention given. We've raised children in the past few decades as "a tribe apart" from the rest of society, and this tribe yearns for reinclusion. We may be moving in the right direction, but we have a long way to go.

Doriane Lambelet Coleman
Duke Law School

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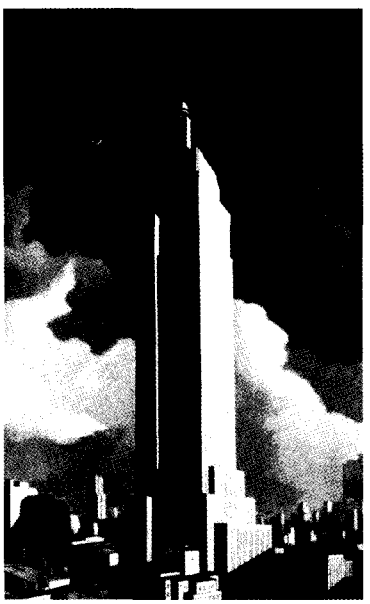

Empire State Building, 1940
by Victor Perelli (fl. 1940)
New-York Historical Society / Bridgeman Art Library

Theodore Dalrymple is a physician who regularly sees patients in an English prison. He is a contributing editor of *City Journal* and a columnist for the *Spectator*. His latest book, *Life at the Bottom*, is a collection of his *City Journal* essays.

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Kay S. Hymowitz, a contributing editor of *City Journal*, is the author of *Liberation's Children: Parents and Kids in a Postmodern Age* and *Ready or Not: Why Treating Children as Small Adults Endangers Their Future—And Ours*.

Stefan Kanfer is a contributing editor of *City Journal* and a former editor of *Time*. The most recent of his many books is *Ball of Fire: The Tumultuous Life and Comic Art of Lucille Ball*.

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Sol Stern is a contributing editor of *City Journal* and the author of *Breaking Free: Public School Lessons and the Imperative of School Choice*.

David L. Tubbs, a Brady Visiting Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, is completing a book entitled *Liberalism's Orphans*.

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Tuscan Diarist

Discontent in Paradise

Theodore Dalrymple

If an urban paradise exists, it surely must be San Gimignano, the Tuscan hill town whose medieval stone towers look from a distance like a condottiere's Manhattan. Nearby Volterra is not bad either, and as for Siena—they all exemplify the surprising excellence of Italian urban administration, in such marked contrast to the national governance. The Italians are the greatest exponents in the world of living modern lives in ancient surroundings, adapting them to their current needs without destroying them.

I was in San Gimignano for May Day and had just finished breakfast in my hotel (where, a few centuries ago, the Inquisition held its trials), when I heard a brass band approaching. Such jolly music drew me to the restaurant's window, where the waiter also stood.

The brass band belonged to a celebratory procession of the Partito della Rifondazione Comunista. It wasn't a large procession, mainly middle-aged men bearing red flags, but with a small younger contingent flying the multicolored flag now used by homosexuals across the world. Oddly, all the party's posters in the city sported this symbol, though nowhere have communist parties in power shown much tolerance toward homosexuality. In hard times, however, one takes one's allies wherever one finds them. I couldn't help but recall how, when I was a student, I lived with a hard-line Marxist, a kind of Savonarola of dialectical materialism, who saw homosexuality in the same light as Schubert lieder—namely, as a manifestation of counter-revolutionary petit-bourgeois pessimism.

The helpful, kindly, and obliging waiter threw a red carnation down to the procession. He was a communist, then, or at least a communist sympathizer. This sympathy was odd, because his entire livelihood, indeed the livelihood of San Gimignano, depended upon the presence of bourgeois tourists. Did he really hate those whom he served with such polite attentiveness?

The history of the Soviet Union evidently meant nothing to him—but on second thought, perhaps it did. For in the Soviet Union in the good old days, the waiter, not the customer, was king. He decided who, of the hundreds of people trying to get into his establishment, would get a table; and he decided what, if anything, would be served. In times of shortage, a waiter is a powerful man; and it is not so unusual for the subservient to dream of being, one day, top dog.

Few come to Italy without thinking that it would be delightful to live there. The Italian peninsula, besides being surpassingly beautiful, shows more material evidence of human genius than anywhere else in the world; nowhere in the world is la dolce vita more dolce.

But it is not given to man to live in perfect contentment. As Horace said two millennia ago, "They change their skies, not their souls, who run across the sea." Human discontent springs eternal, even in the most exquisite surroundings. Maybe that explains the major demonstrations in all of Italy's major cities on the 50th anniversary of Stalin's death; many of those marching carried portraits of the Little Father of the Peoples that bore the legend: "We render homage to Joseph Stalin."

During an earlier trip to Italy, I attended a neo-fascist rally addressed by Mussolini's granddaughter Alessandra. A doctor who acts like a starlet and who has allowed nude photos of herself to appear in the media, she nevertheless received an enthusiastic greeting from the party faithful. "Duce! Duce! Duce!" they roared, their faces contorted in hatred and frustration.

But what frustrated them, and what did they hate? What motivates men to remain loyal to dreadful political ideologies, decades after their murderous failure has become inescapable? The Partito della Rifondazione's website talks of "Liberation," without stating what it is we will be liberated from. Boredom? Drudgery? All the little annoyances that result from being human? Or is it liberation from scruples that we desire?

The history of both the fascists and the communists suggests that it is.

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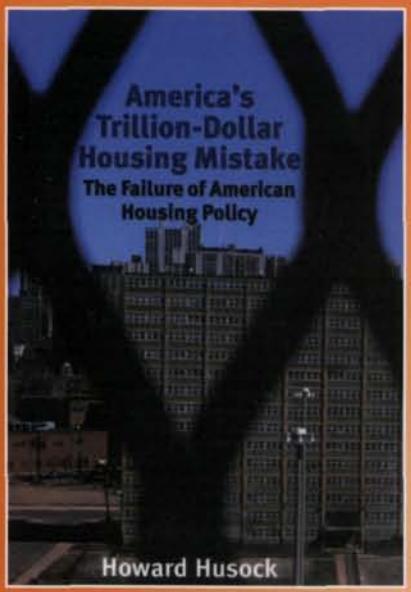

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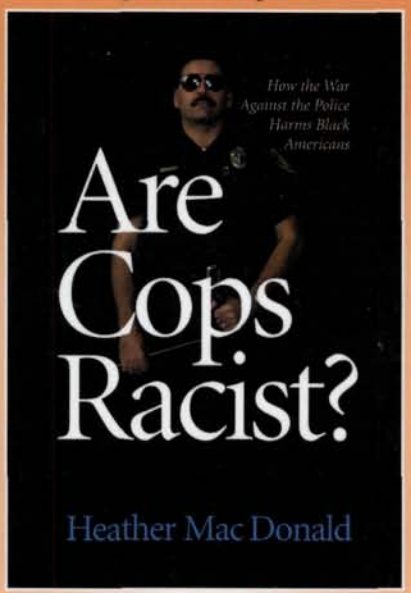

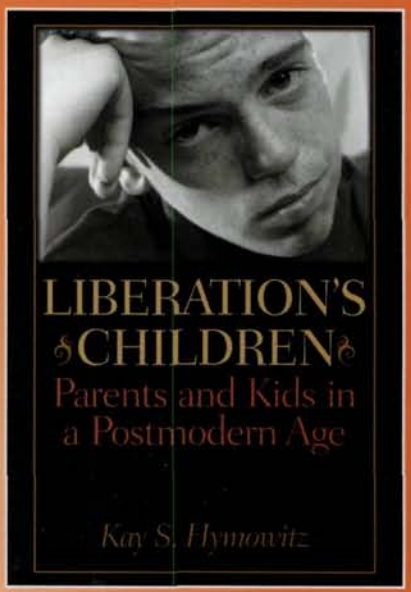

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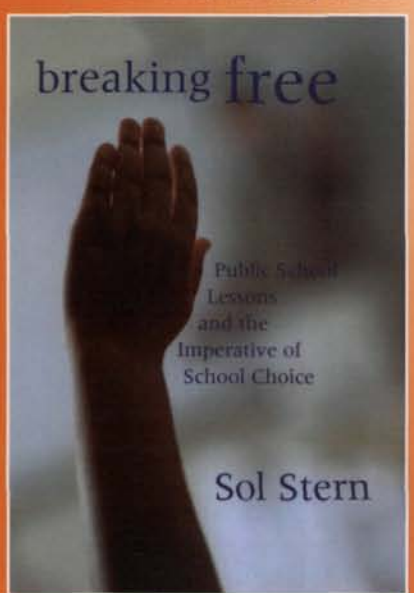

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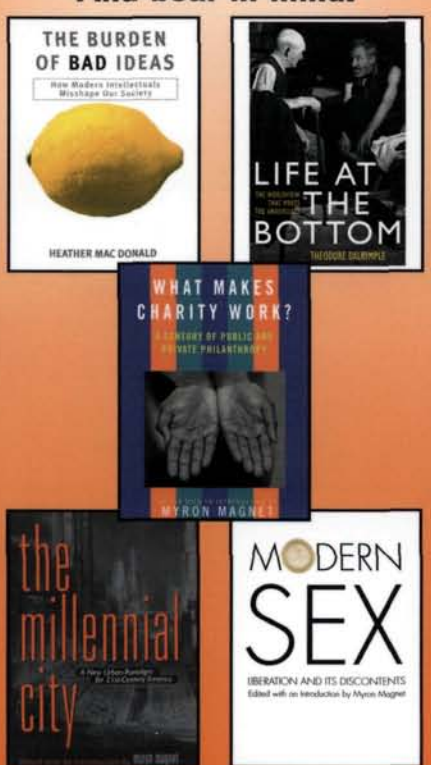

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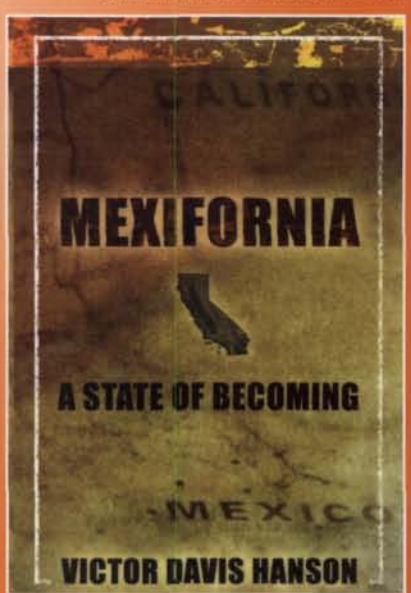

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